W.C. TUTTLE – SHOTGUN WORK FOR SHORTY

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Adventure

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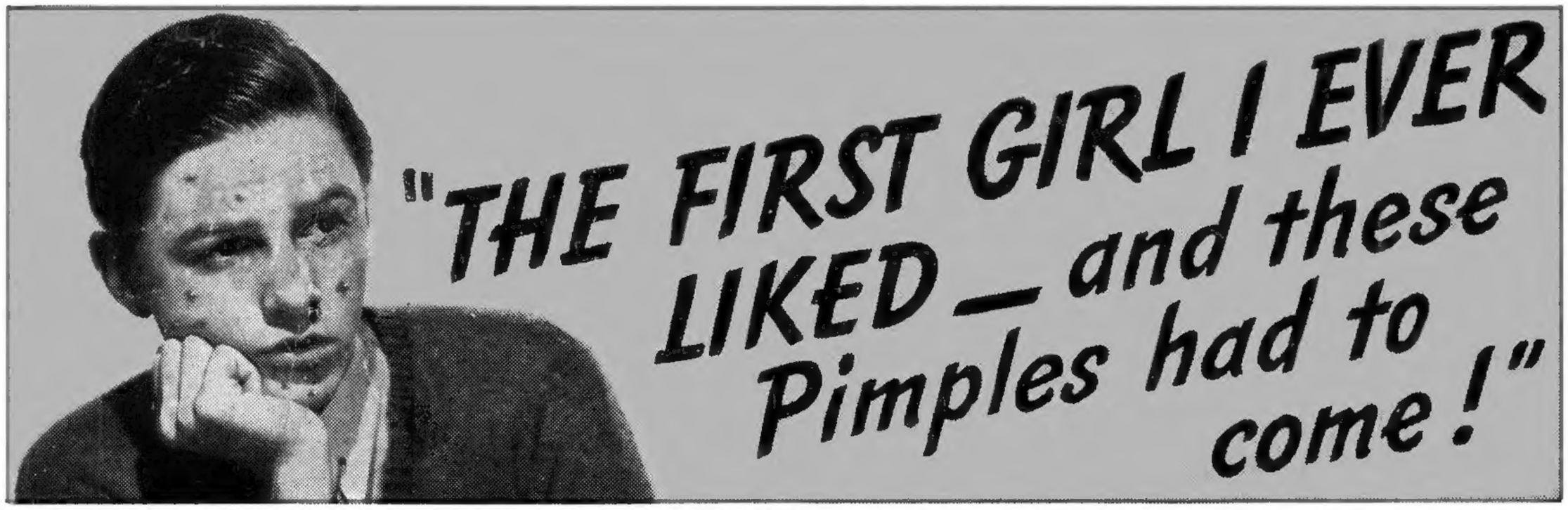
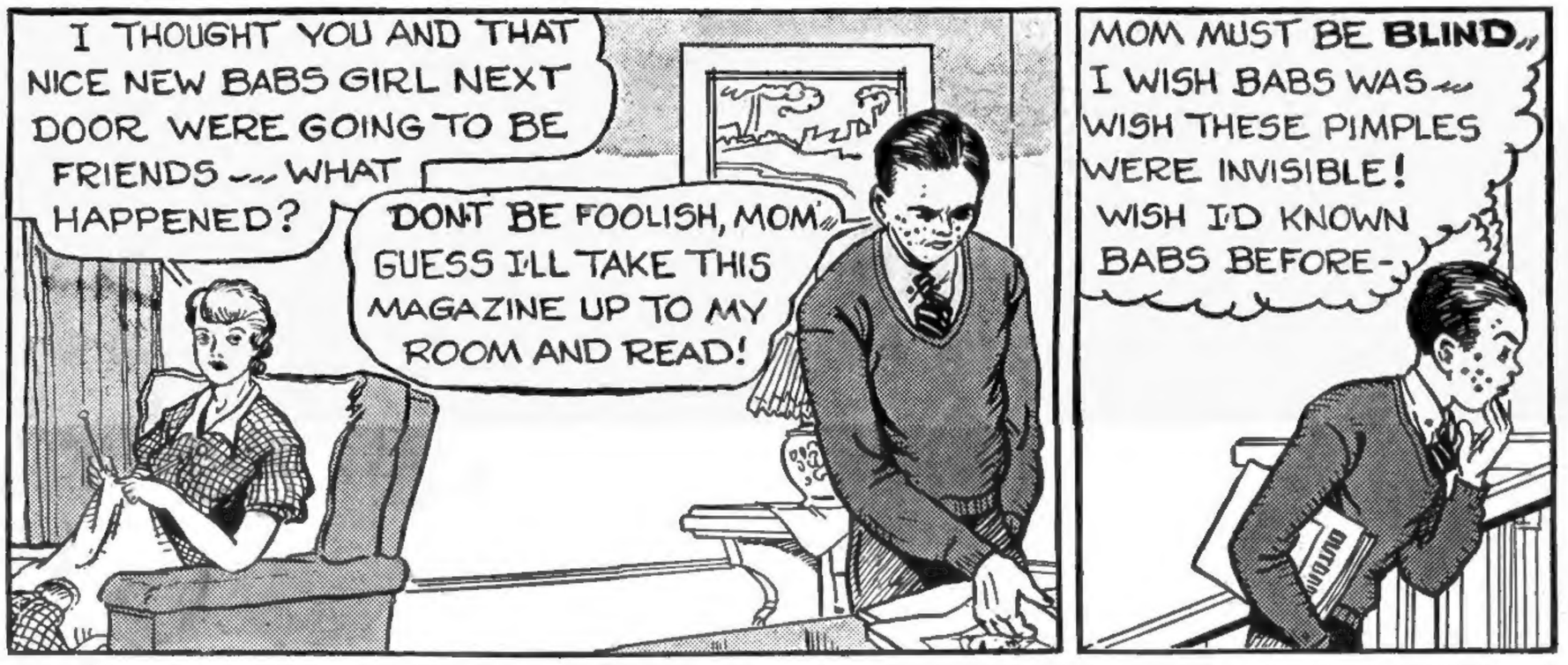
"BENDS" AND "SQUEEZES" by COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

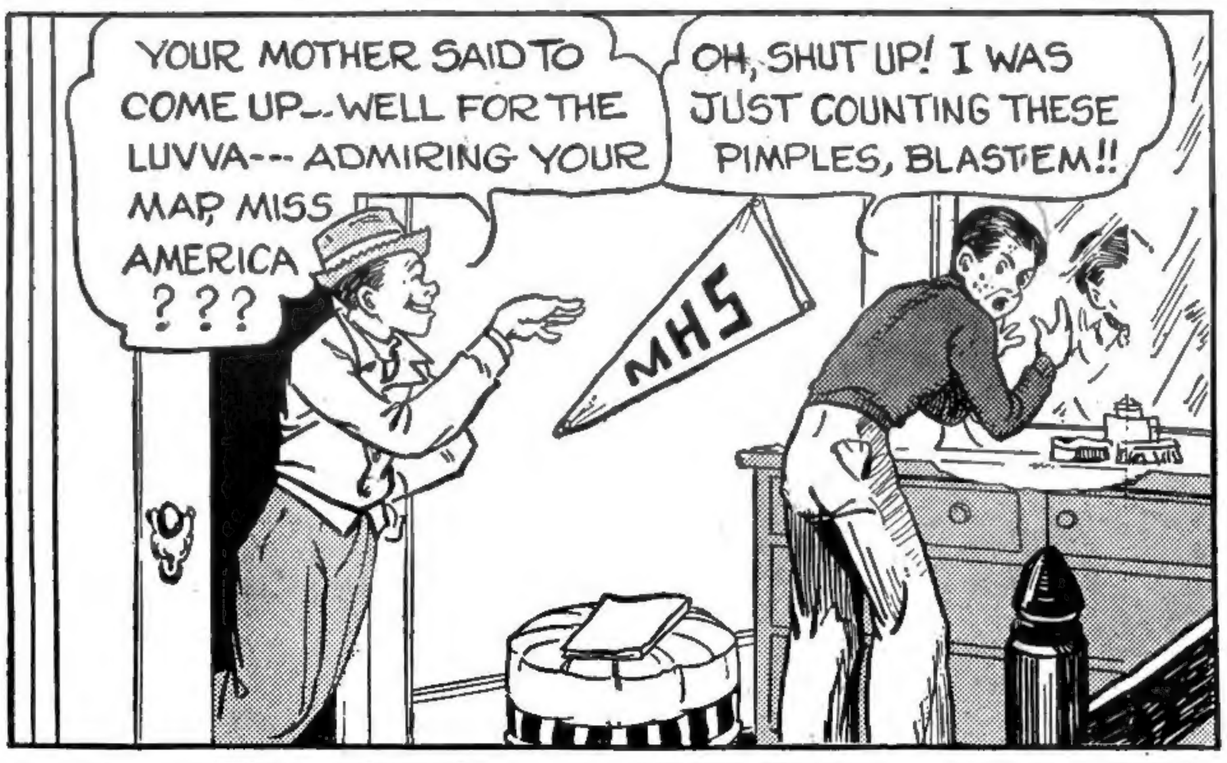
SHARK!

by CAPTAIN JEAN ELLRICH, SHARKOLOGIST



But it wasn't too late, Ben found, to mend the trouble


I THOUGHT YOU AND THAT NICE NEW BABS GIRL NEXT DOOR WERE GOING TO BE FRIENDS — WHAT HAPPENED?
DON'T BE FOOLISH, MOM. GUESS I'LL TAKE THIS MAGAZINE UP TO MY ROOM AND READ!
MOM MUST BE BLIND. I WISH BABS WAS — WISH THESE PIMPLES WERE INVISIBLE! WISH I'D KNOWN BABS BEFORE —


YOUR MOTHER SAID TO COME UP — WELL FOR THE LUVVA — ADMIRING YOUR MAP, MISS AMERICA ???
OH, SHUT UP! I WAS JUST COUNTING THESE PIMPLES, BLAST 'EM!!
MHS

DOES SEEM TO BE A LOT OF 'EM — SAY, YOU KNOW MY COUSIN RAY — HE TOOK FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST FOR HIS PIMPLES — WIPED 'EM RIGHT OFF THE OLD PHIZ
FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST DID THAT? SAY, LEAD ME TO IT!

LATER
BABS, GO TO THE SCHOOL DANCE WITH ME NEXT SATURDAY?
WHY, I SORT OF HAD A DATE, BUT — YES, I'D LOVE TO!
GOSH, I'M GLAD I GOT RID OF THOSE PIMPLES!

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—clears the skin

by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

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Vol. 94, No. 5 for Published Once A Month

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"Seex men," Chico told Shorty, "say Johnny Wayne keel Telford. But I am jus' like a clem. An' a clem ees a feesh w'ich ees so damn see-crit that w'en hees shut hees mouth, you can't even see hees feet."

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SHOTGUN WORK FOR SHORTY

CHAPTER I

HANGING EVIDENCE

JOHNNY WAYNE groaned dismally, opened his eyes and looked up at the moon. His impression was that the moon was a little lop-sided, until he closed one eye, which brought the orb back to normal.

"I shore must have been awful drunk," Johnny told himself, as he struggled to a sitting position.

A hundred feet away was the black mass of a building, with one lighted window. Johnny caressed a very sore head. Suddenly it all came back to him. That building was the ranch-house of the Box T. Johnny managed to get to his unsteady feet and feel himself over.

There was a decided lump over his left eye and another just above his right ear, where he had been hit. His gun was still in his holster. He found his hat a few feet away, but his head was too sore to wear it. He was still sick and dizzy, but he remembered that two men

A novelette by W. C. TUTTLE

had assaulted him when he got off his horse near the ranch-house.

"Bill Spears and Nick Larimore," decided Johnny. Spears was the foreman of the Box T, and Nick was one of the cowboys.

"Danged thugs," muttered Johnny. "I'll betcha they knew I'd be up here to talk with Henry Telford. Mebbe Telford told 'em to bend me all up. Him sendin' me word to keep away from Jean! I'll betcha he posted some of his gunmen out here, waitin' for me to show up.

"All right," Johnny gritted his teeth, "I'm here to see Henry Telford—and I'm goin' to see him, y'betcha. Man, am I sore!"

Johnny shifted his holster, adjusted his chaps, and went slowly toward the big front door of the ranch-house. There was not a sound, but Johnny was not a trusting soul. He loosened his gun as he came up to the door, where he knocked boldly. The door was not latched, and it swung open.

A lamp was burning on a table near the center of the room. Johnny shoved

the door open further. Apparently the room was empty. Johnny was about to close the door, when he saw a boot extending out on the floor, just beyond the table. He stepped inside the room, walked around a big chair and jerked to a stop.

Flat on his back on the floor was Henry Telford, arms flung wide, the shaded lamplight directly on his face. Johnny knew the man was dead. He went closer. On Telford's white shirt-bosom was a wide streak of crimson.

"Shot—dead center," muttered the young cowboy. "My God!"

It seemed incredible. Henry Telford, shot dead in his own home! Henry Telford, the big man of the Ocotillo country, banker, cattleman, prominent citizen; the man Johnny Wayne had come to see, because Telford had sent him a curt note, warning him to keep away from Jean Telford.

Johnny did not realize what it might mean if any one knew he had been there at the Box T. There had been no love lost between Telford's Box T and the Bar W, Johnny Wayne's outfit; but there had been no violence. Johnny did not hear the horse and buggy stop at the door of the ranch-house, but had turned toward the doorway, as Jean Telford, her mother and Sam Acker, cashier of the Ocotillo Bank, came into the room.

Jean Telford was a lithe young lady, a decided brunette, and the prettiest girl in the country. Mrs. Telford was tall and dignified, gray-haired and very severe of countenance. Acker, the cashier, was about thirty-five, tall and dark, with a small mustache and an air of superiority. It was hinted that Acker was to marry Jean.

"Johnny Wayne!" exclaimed Jean. "Why, I—where is Dad?"

By that time Acker had seen the body. He brushed past Johnny and stood over Telford's body. Mrs. Telford cried out, as she sank down on a couch. To Johnny Wayne it was a nightmare. He realized now what this might mean to him.

Acker whirled on Johnny, his mouth working queerly.

"So you didn't have time to get away, eh?" gritted Acker. "Caught in the act, Wayne."

"Don't be a fool," Johnny muttered tensely. He was watching Jean, who seemed carved from marble. She turned and looked at him.

"Johnny, you—why did you do this?" she asked in a whisper.

Johnny shook his head, unable to voice a denial. Acker grasped him roughly by the arm.

"Don't you move," he gritted. "Jean, we've got to get somebody to go for the sheriff."

"I'll go," said Johnny. Acker glared at him fiercely.

"*You'll go?* You dirty murderer, you are not going anywhere."

Stung by Acker's words, Johnny jerked away, flinging Acker off balance. As he whirled free, he smashed Acker square on the jaw with his right fist. Acker went flat on his back and didn't move. Johnny stepped over to the doorway and turned.

"Jean, I didn't do that," he said coldly. "No matter how it seems, I didn't do it. I came to see your father, and two men beat me up. When I recovered I came in here—and found him. It's shore hard to believe, but it's true. If they sent me to jail I wouldn't have a Chinaman's chance, so I'm goin' now. Acker won't be out long, and—good night."

He closed the door and went stumbling down the steps. He found his horse where he had left him, mounted and rode straight across the hills toward the Bar W.

"Any jury in Arizona would hang me," he muttered, as he galloped along. "The deadwood is piled on me seven feet high—and how in the devil can I ever prove that I didn't kill Telford?"

The motive was sufficient. Old Hardpan Wayne, an uncle of Johnny, had never been friendly with the Box T. He disliked Henry Telford, and the dislike was reciprocated. For years Telford had tried to put Wayne out of business, but with no success. He even took a mortgage on the Bar W for seventeen thousand, five hundred dollars, feeling that Old Hardpan would never be able to pay it off.

When Hardpan died, Telford felt sure that the Bar W would revert to the bank on that debt. But Old Hardpan willed the Bar W to young Johnny Wayne, and left him twenty thousand dollars in cash, with the provision that the mortgage be paid off at once.

Every one in the Ocotillo country knew that Telford had planned on owning the Bar W. Johnny knew the story from Hardpan. There was no chance for Johnny to be friends with Henry Telford, but that fact did not deter Johnny from falling in love with Jean—which was all very nice, until Henry Telford found it out. He had declared that only over his dead body could Johnny Wayne marry Jean—and now he was dead. In fact, that note from Telford had informed Johnny in no uncertain tones that any further visits to the Telford ranch might end disastrously for Johnny.

IT WAS still early in the evening when Johnny reached the Bar W. Shorty McGill, Jonah Topete, Chico Lopez and Sody Sims were playing pitch in the bunkhouse, when Johnny broke in on them.

Shorty McGill was nearly seven feet tall, and as thin as the proverbial rail, with a long, lean face and a long, tired-looking mustache. Sody Sims was five feet, four inches tall and would weigh close to two hundred pounds. Sody was the ranch cook. Jonah Topete and Chico Lopez were two undersized Mexicans, who had worked for Hardpan Wayne and had been retained by Johnny.

They drank tequila—when they could get it—and murdered the King's English all the time. But they were good men with cattle and horses, and willing, at all times, to work at anything.

"He-e-e-ey!" exploded Shorty. "Whatcha been doin' to yore head, Johnny? Bronc dump you on a rock-pile?"

"Listen!" panted Johnny. "Is Jug-Head in the corral?"

"Why . . . shore. But what in hell—"

"Chico, my horse is jist outside," said Johnny. "Yank my saddle off and put it on Jug-Head."

"*Si, si,*" replied Chico. "But w'at ees wrong weeth you?"

"Don't ask notheeng, Chico," said Jonah. "Go change theese saddle. I leesten to all theese whys, myself, personally. *Vamoso!*"

"They'll be after me pretty quick," declared Johnny. "They'll want me for the murder of Henry Telford. I'm headin' for Mexico right away. Shorty, you run this place until—"

"Wait a minute!" snapped Shorty. "Did you kill Telford?"

"No, I didn't—but it shore looks like I did. Listen!"

As quickly as possible Johnny told them what had happened at the Box T ranch-house.

"Great lovely dove," groaned Sody. "You shore loaded it onto yourself, Johnny. Mebbe it was suicide."

"No gun on the floor, Sody. Nothin' to make it suicide."

"Telford was too damn mean to commit suicide," drawled Shorty. "If he wanted to die he'd have hired the cheapest gunman he could find and made the feller furnish his own shells."

Chico came in, announcing that Jug-Head, Johnny's favorite horse, was outside the door.

"All right," said Johnny, "I'll be back when I can. Shorty, you keep things

movin'. I've got to find a place and hole up; and as soon as I do, I'll let you know —some way. They'll be here, just as soon as Acker can get word to the sheriff. *Adios.*"

And a moment later he was gone. They listened to the hoofbeats of his horse, as he struck an old road, which led due south, and then went back into the bunkhouse.

"W'at ees wrong?" queried Chico. "I 'ave never been telling."

"Eet ees like theese, Chico," replied Jonah. "Johnny ees got *nota* from Señor Telford, wheech ees saying for heem to not come some more to theese Box T rancho, or he weel knock hell from Johnny. So-o-o," Jonah expanded under this heavy narrative, "Johnny, hees go there to tell Señor Telford to go from hell. In the dark, one whole damn army jump on Johnny and make beeg lomp on hees head.

"Johnny hees got up and go een ranch-house, we're hees keel Señor Telford dead. That ees—"

"Wait a minute, you bug-headed Yaqui!" snorted Shorty. "He didn't kill Telford. Telford was already dead."

"Sure," agreed Jonah. "That ees right for telling. Johnny say hees look like he ees dead, so—"

"He didn't say no such damn thing! He said it looked like he done the killing. *He didn't kill Telford.* If you can't git that through yore thick skull, I'll muzzle both of you, before the sheriff gets here."

"Put muzzle on heem," grinned Chico. "He ain't got a brain in my head."

"Wait a minute!' snorted Sody. "If that sheriff shows up, and either of you Mexicans open yore mouths, I'll hammer you until you ain't thicker'n a *tortilla.* Understand?"

"That ees damn theen for being hammered," declared Jonah seriously.

"Sure," agreed Chico. "But w'at ees use for being so damn theen?"

"Aw, drop it," growled Shorty. "Just keep yore mouths shut."

"That's the idea," agreed Sody. "We might as well play cards. No use goin' to bed and havin' Nebrasky Nolan hammerin' on the doors. Him and Fuzzy Rugg will prob-ly be out here pretty quick. What'll we tell him?"

"Tell him nothin'," replied Shorty. picking up the worn deck of cards. "We ain't seen Johnny since supper."

SODY SIMS was right. In about an hour Nebraska Nolan, the sheriff, and Fuzzy Rugg, the deputy, came to the ranch. They came quietly. Not a sound was heard until they flung the bunkhouse door open and came in, guns in hand.

Nebraska Nolan was five feet, five inches tall, and would not weigh over a hundred and twenty pounds. He had sharp features, cold, blue eyes and grizzled hair. Fuzzy Rugg was six feet tall, weighed over two hundred pounds, and had a face habitually red and moon-like.

The two officers stood in the doorway, eyeing the four men.

"Where's Johnny Wayne?" asked the sheriff crisply.

"And don't lie," added Fuzzy.

"Johnny?" queried Shorty. "Why, he went to Ocotillo after supper."

"And came back here a little while ago," added the sheriff.

"You shore dug up some news for us," declared Sody.

"Uh-huh," grunted the sheriff. "His black horse is in the corral, still sweatin'."

"Oh, yeah—the black horse," parroted Shorty. "Well, you see, that there black horse had the colic, so we mixed up a dose of pepper and mustard. Oh, we shore gave him plenty—but I didn't suppose he'd still be sweatin'. Jonah, you better git him in the stable and blanket him, before he gits a bad cold."

"Sure," agreed Jonah. He started for

the doorway, but Fuzzy grabbed him by the arm, turned him around and said:

"Where's Johnny Wayne?"

"*Madre de Dios!*" yelped Jonah. "Eef I open your mouth, I get as flat like a *tortilla.*"

"That makes a terrible lot of sense," said the sheriff dryly.

Fuzzy released Jonah, who went out like a frightened rabbit.

"What the hell's this all about, anyway?" asked Shorty.

"Oh, you don't know, eh?" replied the sheriff. "Well, it prob'ly ain't news, but Johnny Wayne shot and killed Henry Telford this evenin'."

"No!" snorted Shorty and Sody in amazement.

"That's what he done. Sam Acker, Mrs. Telford and Jean came home and caught him at it."

"Caught him killin' Telford?" asked Shorty.

"Caught him leanin' over the corpse, jist after he'd fired the fatal shot. Sam Acker saw him."

"You know," said Shorty soberly, "I was jist thinkin'."

"I can't hardly believe it," the sheriff said.

"Jist thinking'—what would a stopped that Acker guy from killin' Telford hisself—an' then meetin' the two women later an' comin' back innocent like to find the body? I read a story oncet like that. Can he prove he was with them all evenin'?"

"Hell," the sheriff said wearily, "even if he can't, they's ten thousand other guys in the shadder of the gallows, if you git figgerin' thataway. But only one of 'em, seems if, was thoughtless enough to be gloatin' over the remains when they found him. That's what's goin' to hang Johnny Wayne."

"I don't believe it," declared Sody. "Johnny wouldn't gloat. Who said he was gloatin'?"

"Sam Acker, I told you."

"Aw, hell! He wouldn't know a gloat from a hick-up. I'll betcha he couldn't describe a gloat."

"Jean and his mother seen him, too."

"Seen him gloat?"

"Well, I dunno about that. I ain't talked with them yet. Sam came in and brought word to us."

"All right," said Shorty seriously, "I'll jist make you a little bet that neither of them women will admit that they seen Johnny gloatin'. That's a awful serious charge, Nebrasky."

"Murder?"

"No—gloatin'."

"A-a-a-a-aw, hell!" snorted Fuzzy. "They're kiddin' you, Nebrasky. All the time we're wastin' is only givin' Johnny more chance to make a getaway. These snake-hunters won't tell anythin'. They think this is a joke."

"Murder ain't no joke," declared Shorty soberly. "Not even the murder of Henry Telford. We ain't hangin' no crêpe on our cows, but even at that, it ain't the right thing to do. As far as Johnny Wayne is concerned, though, he didn't do it."

"Who did, then?"

"Well, that's a question, Nebrasky."

"If you can answer it, you'll save the cost of a hangin'."

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about a hangin'. You've got to catch a man before you can even try him for murder."

"Headed for Mexico, eh?" queried Fuzzy. "I told Nebrasky, I bet he would."

"Well, that takes brains," sighed Shorty.

"To go to Mexico?"

"No-o-o—jist thinkin' he might go there."

Fuzzy moved over close to Chico, eyeing him balefully.

"What horse did Johnny ride away from here?" he asked roughly.

"You know w'at I theenk?" countered Chico.

"What do you think, Mex?"

"I theenk maybe we 'ave rain *mañana.*"

"Yeah, you got a hell of a lot of information, Fuzzy," said the sheriff. "We might as well go out to the ranch and see what's what. The coroner will be there by that time. We'll see you fellers in the mornin'."

"Don't git lost," said Sody. "It's dark out tonight."

Jonah came up from the stable and joined them as they stood in the doorway, watching the two officers ride away.

Shorty chuckled softly and shook his head.

"That gloat idea got 'em, Sody. Neither one of 'em knew what it was."

"Theese officer ees ver' ignorant," declared Chico. "My brodder een *Mejico,* hees own t'ree hondred."

"Three hundred what?"

"Gloats."

"I reckon we all better go to bed," said Shorty evenly. "We might have a hard day tomorrow—and I wouldn't know where to bury both bodies tonight—even if I did foller my natural inclinations."

CHAPTER II

DEATH IN MASKS

OCOTILLO BEND was all agog over the murder of their most prominent citizen. A posse was out in the hills, skirmishing along the Border, five miles south of town, looking for Johnny Wayne. In the office of the county prosecutor sat Shorty McGill and Sody Sims; while John Harper, the prosecutor, a huge, raw-boned person with an unruly shock of grizzled hair, paced the small room. The two men had refused to admit knowing where Johnny had gone.

"You boys might as well admit that you saw him last night, and know where he went," argued the lawyer. "This is murder, you know; dastardly, cold-blooded murder. Every bit of evidence is direct, so there is no question of his guilt."

"Nobody seen Johnny shoot him," said Shorty. "Nobody heard the shots. That ain't *direct* evidence, Harper."

"Direct enough for me," retorted the lawyer.

"Yeah, I s'pose," sighed Shorty, "All you want is a conviction. Johnny is our boss—yeah, and he's our friend, too. If you wait for me and Sody to tell you anythin' they'll be usin' hell for a skatin' rink long before we say anythin'."

"Keeping your mouths shut is tantamount to admitting that you know Johnny killed Telford."

"I dunno anythin' about any catamounts," replied Shorty dryly, "but yo're all wrong, pardner. We know damn well that Johnny never killed Henry Telford."

"Prove it," growled the lawyer.

"That's jist what I'm goin' to try doin'," smiled Shorty.

"Yes," flared the lawyer, "and they will probably be skating in hell, long before you produce the evidence."

"Well," drawled Shorty, "it might pay you to take yore skates along, Harper; you never can tell."

They left the office and crossed the street to the Cactus Saloon. The Ocotillo Bank was closed, a black bow tied to the handle. In the saloon they found several men at the bar, among them Buck and Ed La Due, two brothers who had a small ranch about seven miles from town and near the border. A discussion waned as the two came in.

"Go ahead and talk about it," said Shorty. "You can't hurt our feelin's."

"I don't guess they've got Johnny yet," said Ed La Due.

"You can bet on that most every day—and win," said Sody.

"Why don't he give himself up, take a chance on bein' cleared?"

"You must have been awful bright, even as a child," said Shorty.

"How do you figger that?" queried La Due.

"You ain't over thirty, are you, Ed?"

"Thirty-two m' last birthday."

"Well," explained Shorty, "no man was ever able to build up that much brain in thirty-two years. You was born with brains, feller."

"Well, I dunno," grinned Ed, rather pleased. "I'll betcha Johnny went into Mexico."

"You see?" queried Sody seriously. "That proves it, Shorty. Mebbe I'm dumb, 'cause I'd never think of such a thing. It shore is marvelous. In celebration of such intelligence, I'll buy a drink."

They were still at the bar when the posse returned. There were six riders in the posse: Bill Spears, Nick Larimore, Lou Russell, Ben Beach and the two officers. They were tired and thirsty as they crowded up to the bar. Their search had been fruitless; they knew it would be, before they started.

"Aw, the dirty killer headed for Mexico," said Spears, taking off his sombrero and wiping his sweaty face with his sleeve.

"That's a cinch," agreed Larimore.

"The same old idea," sighed Sody.

"Still," said Shorty, "it proves vast intelligence."

"What'd you say?" queried Spears, backing away from the bar. He was a tall, handsome cowboy of about thirty-five.

Shorty McGill turned from the bar and faced Spears.

"Speakin' to me?" queried Shorty.

"I asked you what you said."

"Oh!" replied Shorty blankly. "Lemme see-e-e. Now, jist what was it? Sody said somethin' to me and I said somethin' to Sody—and then I said somethin' —now, jist what was it? You remember, Sody?"

"Somethin' about brains, wasn't it?" asked Sody.

"My brains?" queried Spears coldly.

"It couldn't have been," replied Shorty. "You ain't got any."

Bill Spears was known as a man with a hair-trigger temper. There was no smile on Shorty's face. The statement was like a slap in the face. In a blaze of fury Spears' right hand flashed down to his holstered gun, and at the same moment Shorty's bony fist landed square on Spears' nose.

The force of the blow knocked Spears back against the bar, his hand jerking away from his gun, when Shorty, with a half-stride, brought up that right fist in a sweeping uppercut, which caught Spears square under the chin. Spears was falling, as Larimore surged away from the bar, clawing his gun; but Sody tripped him with one foot, while with his left fist he hit Larimore a smashing blow on the ear, which sent him sprawling under a card table.

A moment later Shorty and Sody were backing from the saloon, guns in hand, narrowly watching the shocked crowd at the bar.

"That pays back for you fellers gangin' up on Johnny Wayne last night," declared Shorty grimly. "The Bar W allus pays its debts."

Then they whirled, went swiftly to the hitch-rack, where they mounted and rode out of town.

Spears and Larimore got back to their feet. Larimore's ear was badly swollen, while Spears was barely able to talk.

"Man!" exclaimed Fuzzy Rugg. "Them fellers are dynamite! What did they mean—payin' you fellers back for gangin' up on Johnny Wayne last night?"

"They're crazy," groaned Spears. "We never ganged up on him."

"Somethin' funny about this deal," declared the sheriff.

"Well, you go ahead and laugh—I can't," replied Spears.

SAM ACKER, the bank cashier, was the principal witness at the inquest. He told a dramatic story of what he knew about the tragedy, and he left no doubt in the minds of the six-men jury that Johnny Wayne murdered Henry Telford. He was knocked out, and did not hear Johnny's denial of guilt to Jean Telford; but Jean told it to the jury, speaking in a low voice filled with emotion.

Bill Spears, still nursing a very sore jaw, told about the note of warning which Telford had sent to Johnny Wayne. Telford had let his foreman read the note, and had told him to see that Johnny kept away from the Telford ranch. When the coroner had finished with Spears, the sheriff indicated a desire to question the witness.

"Bill, I want to ask you a question," he said. "After that fight over in the Cactus Saloon yesterday, Shorty McGill said somethin' about payin' you fellers back for gangin' up on Johnny Wayne, night before last. Who ganged up on him, and what for, Bill?"

"You can search me," replied Bill. "It shore was news to me."

"Where was you fellers when Henry Telford was killed?"

"Right here. We rode in after supper. Mrs. Telford and Jean came in later, and Sam Acker went back with 'em. We was here when Acker came to town, lookin' for you."

"That's all, Bill; but I still ain't satisfied," said the sheriff.

"If you think I am, yo're crazy," declared Bill grimly.

Without leaving their seats, the jury decided that Henry Telford was killed by a pistol shot, presumably inflicted by Johnny Wayne; and demanded that Wayne be captured and tried for murder.

After the inquest the sheriff talked with Sam Acker about the bank.

"The bank examiner is due here next week," said Acker. "I don't want to open the bank until after the funeral, because I feel that Mrs. Telford and Jean need my assistance. The bank is in fine shape, but there is a certain amount of work to be done; so I believe I shall run in this evening and work for a few hours. I hope that the bank will continue, and I can see no reason for its not continuing. As far as the patrons of the bank are concerned, they need not worry, because everything is in fine shape."

"Well, that's good," agreed the sheriff. "You know how folks are—about havin' their money in a closed bank. I'll pass the word."

"I wish you would, because I know how they feel."

"There's one of the finest fellers I know, Fuzzy," said the sheriff, after Acker walked away.

"Yeah," replied the deputy. "Jonah wasn't such a hell of a bad hombre, either—but the whale got him."

"You don't like Acker?"

"Too clean, Nebrasky. I'd like to roll him in the dirt."

"It wouldn't hurt *us* to put on a clean shirt once in a while. Acker shore smells good."

"Mebbe he does, but you don't see no dogs follerin' him, do you?"

Chico and Jonah slipped in at the rear of the inquest crowd and listened to the testimony and decision before going back to the ranch. Shorty and Sody were arguing in the kitchen, when the two Mexicans came back, bursting with importance.

"Theese jory goin' 'ang Johnny Wayne damn queek!" blurted Chico.

"Found him guilty, eh?" queried Shorty.

"Not found heem yet," grinned Chico. "That ees the bog een the axle-gris."

"Well, that's all you could expect,"

sighed Sody. "I wonder who in the devil did kill Telford."

"Johnny Wayne," replied Chico soberly. "Seex men say so. Theese sheriff say so, too. Everybodee in theese beeg room nod hees head."

"What do you think, Jonah?" asked Shorty.

"I theenk to keep my mouth shut," replied Jonah.

"That's the stuff! See nothin', hear nothin', say nothin'."

"I'm never say notheen," declared Chico. "I am jus' like clem."

"W'at ees clem?" asked Jonah curiously.

"*Por Dios!* You don't know w'at ees a clem?"

"Do you?" grinned Sody.

"Su-u-ure. A clem ees a feesh w'ich ees so damn see-crit that w'en hees shut hees mouth you can't even see hees feet."

"I reckon that covers the clam," chuckled Sody.

"Sure," grinned Chico. "Notheeng ees left, except hees outside."

After supper that evening Shorty and Sody decided to go to town.

"If we run into any of them Box T punchers, we might have to shoot our way loose," said Shorty. "But that's all right."

"Shore," agreed Sody. "I need some practice anyway."

IT WAS about eight o'clock when they tied their horses in front of the Cactus Saloon. A team and buckboard was at the rack, but no saddle-horses. Both men recognized the team and buckboard as being from the Box T spread.

Old Salty Lake, Telford's cook, was at the bar, drinking with the bartender. He looked critically at Shorty and Sody as they came striding into the place.

"Hyah, Salty," greeted Shorty. "Long time I no see you."

"Yeah, that's right, Shorty. Howdy, Sody."

Salty had on a black coat and a black tie, which Sody appraised critically.

"*You* ain't in mournin', are you?" queried Sody.

"Not in'ardly," replied Salty. "But, at that, Telford wasn't a bad feller to work for. Me and him got along. That is, I got plenty work, and he got along. But he's gone now. Heard from Johnny?"

"No, we ain't. I don't suppose any of yore outfit has, either."

"If they have, I ain't heard about it," replied Salty dryly.

"When's the plantin' to take place?" asked Shorty.

"T'morrow afternoon, I believe. Sam Acker's handlin' all the details. I jist brought him in t'night. He's over at the bank, doin' some work which he says has t' be done. He's shore handy around folks which has been bereaved. Almost like a preacher."

"Very sympathetic," nodded Shorty. "Mrs. Telford ain't in very good health —and when she dies, Jean will get the whole works. And if Acker marries Jean—he won't have to work no more."

Salty grinned widely. "Everybody says yo're ignorant as hell, Shorty; but I've allus said you wasn't as dumb as you looked."

"I'll buy a drink," suggested Sody. "That'd be a good joke, if it wasn't true. What'll you have, gents?"

Nebraska Nolan and Fuzzy Rugg came in, looked them over critically, but accepted Sody's invitation to drink.

"I didn't see you two at the inquest," said Nebraska, as he filled his glass to the brim.

"We wasn't interested," replied Shorty.

"I'm lookin' for Johnny Wayne," said the sheriff meaningly.

"He ain't been here this evenin'," said Sody dryly. "I don't know jist where you could find him."

"Uh-huh. Well, I'll git him. How's things at the ranch, Salty?"

"Terrible, Nebrasky. I brought Sam Acker in t'night. He's doin' a little work at the bank."

"Yeah, he told me today he'd be in. How's the women takin' it?"

"Well, pretty good, I s'pose. I heard Jean and Acker arguin' this afternoon. She said she didn't believe Johnny killed her father."

"I didn't think there was that much brains on the Box T," declared Shorty.

"She must be kinda upset over it all," said Nebraska. "Women are apt to—"

From somewhere outside came the muffled report of a heavy shot. A moment later it was followed by another. The men turned from the bar and ran to the doorway. There was a light in the bank across the street, but not a person in sight. Suddenly the front door of the bank banged open, and Acker's voice yelled:

"Help! Help!"

"Prob'ly spilled his ink!" panted Shorty, as they ran across to the bank.

There was only one lamp lighted. Acker was standing about mid-way of the room, a double-barrel shotgun in his hands. The room was acrid with powder smoke, as the men surged in. Acker's face was the color of wood-ashes.

Between Acker and the back door, which was open, lay two men, one sprawled across the other. They were both masked. Nebraska Nolan stepped gingerly over to them, where he halted and looked down at the two.

"They—they robbed the bank!" blurted Acker.

"Uh-huh. You shot 'em?"

"Yes."

"Not bad work, at that," said Shorty. "Perfect score."

Acker laid the shotgun on the counter.

"Why—why don't you try and find the other man?" he managed to ask. "He—he's got the money!"

The sheriff jerked up quickly.

"There was a third one, Acker?"

"That's what I've been trying to make you understand. He got away with the money. I—I only had two shots."

THE sheriff lifted away the cheap, black-cloth masks. One man had received the full charge in his face and neck, while the other had been hit almost in the waist-line. Fifteeen buckshot, at such close range, leaves little to be desired as a killing weapon.

"Buck and Ed La Due," said the sheriff. "I guess mebbe their little cow-ranch was only a sideline. Tell us what happened, Sam."

"Why don't you try to catch the man who got the money?" asked the frightened and exasperated cashier.

"I figure he's gone a long ways by this time. How'd it happen?"

"Do you realize that he got enough money to cripple this bank?" asked the cashier wearily. "Do something, can't you, Sheriff?"

Shorty stooped down and examined the two men, while Acker began his story.

"I came in the back door tonight, and I was sure it locked behind me. I went to work on some books, and I never heard a sound until a man spoke to me. There were three of them, all masked. One of them prodded me with his gun, and demanded that I open the safe. They said I'd either open it, or they would dynamite it.

"I thought they were bluffing, until one of them, the one who got away, drew out dynamite and fuse. One of them said, 'What about this feller?' meaning me. 'Hadn't we better tie him up?'

"The man with the dynamite said, 'Tie up nothin'. Smash him over the head a couple of times with your gun. Cool him off, so he won't never tell what we look like.'

"Well," Acker licked dry lips, "I don't

suppose any man wants to die, so I said I'd open the safe. Dynamite always ruins everything—all the papers and that sort of stuff. So I opened the safe, and they helped themselves. That is, two did, while the third held his gun on me.

"I knew there was a shotgun on the floor beside that desk over there; so I moved around a little, getting close to the desk. One man dumped all the money into a sack, and was ready to leave. He said, 'What about that feller? Hadn't we better fix him before we go?'

" 'Don't bother about him', said one of those men. 'Before he can sound an alarm, we'll be gone. No use killin' anybody.'

"Then they turned around and I grabbed the shotgun. One of the men cried out, just as I shot. I—I don't even remember taking aim. It—it was all over—so awful quick."

Acker drew a deep breath and shook his head.

"You see," he added, "I never shot at a man before."

"It's shore too bad you didn't have a three-barrel gun," said Shorty soberly.

"Lock up the place," ordered the sheriff. "C'mon, Fuzzy. If that third feller was a pal of the La Due boys, mebbe he headed for their ranch."

They all filed out, while Acker tested the doors and extinguished the lamp. Shorty and Sody went over to the rack and mounted their horses.

"I allus figured that them La Due boys was a couple bad ones," said Sody, as they rode out of town.

"They didn't look so awful salty to me," replied Shorty. "But you never can tell how far a dill pickle will squirt. I hope Johnny sends us some word pretty soon."

"Johnny's goin' to lay awful low for a few days, y'betcha."

"He better. Do you know, Sody, I never thought Acker had that much nerve. The boy surprised me."

"Yeah, and I'll betcha he surprised the La Due boys, too."

The sheriff and deputy did not find anyone at the La Due ranch, but they did find a piece of the black cloth from which their masks had been made. It was the lining from an old overcoat.

Shorty and Sody came in early next morning, anxious to know if the sheriff had discovered anything. Quite a number of people were in the bank. The bodies had just been removed. John Harper, the prosecutor, was talking with Acker, trying to gain some sort of a description of the bandit who got away.

"They all looked pretty much alike," said Acker. "There was nothing distinguishing about their clothes."

"It might have been Johnny Wayne?" suggested Harper.

"Well, I—I suppose it could," admitted Acker. I didn't even know who those two were until the sheriff removed their masks."

Harper turned and saw Shorty and Sody leaning on the counter.

"How was Wayne dressed the last time you seen him, McGill?" asked Harper.

"Well," drawled Shorty, "he was wearin' pants, shirt, coat and boots. I dunno what he had on underneath."

"Some day I hope to ask you an intelligent question and get an intelligent answer, McGill."

"I hope you do—you never have," retorted Shorty, and the two worthies from the Bar W walked out, chuckling.

CHAPTER III

BORDER RAIDERS

WHEN Johnny Wayne rode away from the Bar W that night he had no definite destination in mind. He merely wanted to get across the Border, where

he would be safe from the authorities. Daylight found him at the shack of an old maguey cutter, who worked for a little tequila distillery.

Johnny was not unfamiliar with that territory, and Juan, the old maguey cutter, recognized him. Johnny merely handed Juan a few dollars, told him to buy some beef and beans, and moved into the shack.

And it was here that Chico and Jonah found him. Johnny could have hugged the pair, so anxious was he to get late news. In their own queer brand of English, they tried to explain everything in one breath. After a while Johnny interrupted them.

"I reckon I understand," he said. "The coroner's jury said that I killed Telford, and they're lookin' for me."

"I cross my heart and hope you die," agreed Chico fervently.

"And last night the La Due brothers tried to rob the bank, and Sam Acker killed 'em both, eh?"

"Sure," nodded Chico. "He keel t'ree men, but one got away."

"He killed two men, and one got away," corrected Johnny.

"W'at ees the deeference, Johnny?"

"Well, it prob'ly makes a difference to the one who got away. How much money did they get?"

"*Quien sabe?* They theenk you are the one."

"They do? Well, that's nice. Who told you that?"

"Shortee, hees saying eet."

"Well, I'll be a cousin to a blind jackass! Shorty thinks I got away with that money?"

"No, hees say these pipple in town say you take theese money."

"Oh, I see. And they're buryin' Henry Telford today, eh?"

"Sure," interposed Jonah. "No use keep heem laying around."

"No, I reckon that's true, Jonah. Now, I want you boys to be darn careful about comin' down here. I'm trustin' you two to keep quiet."

"Sure," grinned Chico. "I'm jus' one damn clem."

"You're what?"

"Wa't he means ees," explained Jonah, "he's a feesh, and w'en hees shut hees mouth I can't see my feet."

"Jonah spik Englis' jus' like shiphurder," declared Chico.

"That's right, Chico. I wonder if I could trust you two fellers to take a message to Jean Telford?"

"Sure."

"I'll take a chance. I'll write a little note, and you see that she gets it. Don't tell her anythin', but if she gives you a note for me, you be careful that nobody follers you. Understand?"

"That ees easy for me to onderstanding," replied Chico. "Chico Lopez got plenty brain on your head. More than once I know w'at I am saying. I weel deleever theese note myself, personally."

"Hees damn smart boys, theese Chico," declared Jonah proudly. "W'at he don' know, you can't tell heem."

"Yeah, I reckon that's true," agreed Johnny and proceeded to write the note.

SHORTY McGILL, Nebraska Nolan and Fuzzy Rugg were sitting in the main room of the Bar W, while Sody Sims labored amid pots and pans in the kitchen, preparing supper.

"I'm tellin' you the truth about it," insisted Shorty. "Johnny did come home, before he high-tailed it out of the country, and he had plenty bumps on his head to show that he got beat up."

"Where'd he go?" asked the sheriff.

"I've told you the truth up to now, so don't make me lie," replied Shorty. "Anyway, yore guess would be as good as mine."

"A lot of 'em are sayin' that Johnny was the third man in that bank robbery."

"I know. How much was stolen?"

"Acker ain't sure yet, but he thinks they got at least fifteen thousand dollars."

"Acker's quite a hero, ain't he?" smiled Shorty.

"Well, he got two out of the three. It shore took nerve—"

The kitchen door banged open, and Chico's voice rang out excitedly:

"We see Johnee-e-e theese afternoon! Hees leeving weeth Old Juan, and hees send a nota to Mees Telford. Hees say—"

Bang! Something crashed loudly, echoed by Sody's outburst of profanity.

"Dog-gone yuh! You made me drop that kittle of beans right on yore head, Chico! Bustin' in on me thataway!"

Chico howled with pain, made a dive for the doorway, where he collided with Jonah, and they rolled in the yard together. Both kettle and beans were hot —and Sody had dropped that kettle a distance of six feet—in a direct line.

Not only that, but Sody dived out after them, chasing them down to the stable, where he explained that the two officers were in the house.

Nebraska Nolan cocked one eye toward the kitchen, an amused expression on his face.

"Some day," declared Shorty, "I'm goin' to kill me a couple Mexicans."

"Old Juan, eh?" said the sheriff. "That's the old maguey cutter's place, down there in Cinco Encinas Valley."

"Yeah, and it's in Mexico, Nebrasky," said Shorty. "'Yore jurisdiction stops at that bob-wire fence."

"I know it does, Shorty."

"I hope Sody didn't spill all the beans," sighed Fuzzy.

"Chico was the one what spilled 'em," grinned the sheriff.

Sody brought the two chastened

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Mexicans back with him. Chico leaned through the doorway to the main room, a blank expression on his face.

"Where you been all the afternoon?" asked Shorty.

"Nort'," replied Chico blandly. "We see not'ing, 'ear not'ing, say not'ing."

"Been north, eh?" queried the sheriff. "How long since you was in Mexico?"

"*Cinco de Mayo,*" replied Chico.

"Fifth of May, eh? Four months ago. How long since you seen Old Juan?"

"Ol' Juan? I'm don't bilive I'm know heem. W'ere he leeve?"

The sheriff sighed and looked at Shorty.

"It's shore a shame, how quick a Mexican gets Americanized," he said.

"You better come and git it!" yelled Sody. "Grub pile!"

WHILE the sheriff had no idea of going into Mexico after Johnny Wayne, he imparted the information to Bill Spears and Nick Larimore, who thanked him kindly for the tip. Nebraska also watched for Shorty McGill to come to town and saw him give Johnny's note to Jean Telford in front of the bank. It was all done very secretly, but Nebraska was watching closely. A few minutes later he saw Jean give a note to Shorty, in the general store, and saw Shorty leave town immediately.

"That means Shorty's takin' a word to Johnny," decided the sheriff. "Uh-hu-u-uh! This bein' Saturday, with most everybody in town tonight, I wonder if Johnny would be fool enough to try and come back here to see that girl. I believe I'll keep an eye on the Box T this evenin', and see if Jean Telford comes to town."

In the meantime, Bill Spears gathered his riders around him, and told them that Johnny Wayne had been located at Old Juan's shack.

"We don't care about it bein' in Mexico," said Spears. "If it comes down to brass tacks, we can swear we got him on this side of the border. We go and get him tonight. Keep sober, you *hombres.*"

Johnny Wayne had no idea that Jean Telford would answer his note at once—if ever. He knew that the law would surely hang him, if they caught him across the border; but Johnny Wayne was a reckless young man and very much in love. He wanted to see Jean, and try and convince her that he was not guilty. He decided that a ten mile ride and the risking of his neck would be worthwhile, even if he only caught a glimpse of her.

So he saddled Jug-Head at dusk, said nothing to Old Juan, and rode away, skirting the border to a point where he could go straight north across the hills to the Box T ranch.

Nebraska Nolan did not tell Fuzzy what he was going to do. He felt perfectly capable of doing the job better alone than with the assistance of his big deputy. He had checked up on everyone in Ocotillo Bend that evening, but did not see Jean Telford nor her mother. Everyone else from the Box T was there, even Salty Lake, the cook.

So Nebraska rode out to the Box T, staking a few hours of discomfort against a chance to capture Johnny Wayne.

Nebraska tied his horse away from the house, although it was quite dark; and came in near the front fence, where he squatted on his heels to watch the place. There was a light in the main room. Except for the slight rustle of wind in the sycamores, there were no sounds around the ranch.

The sheriff had been there about an hour when he heard a slight sound. It was like gravel tossed against glass. It happened several times. Then the front door opened, and he saw Jean standing against the light. Everything else was in darkness. She said something, but he was unable to hear what it was. Then a man stepped into the illumination of the doorway, hesitated there for

a moment, and went into the house, closing the door.

"Johnny Wayne!" exclaimed Nebraska to himself. "Trapped himself, the young fool."

Quietly Nebraska got to his feet and started toward the house.

There was no one in the main room. Through an uncovered window, the sheriff had a good view of the interior. Then he saw a brighter light from the upstairs window.

"Gone upstairs, eh?" he remarked to himself. "Prob'ly talkin' to Mrs. Telford and Jean up there."

Nebraska circled the patio, looking for Johnny's horse, but was unable to find it; so he came back, entered the patio gate, and stood perfectly still. He felt sure that Johnny would leave from the rear of the house.

After a minute or two he heard the soft creak of an upstairs door, the soft slither of leather on wood. Then he saw the dark bulk of a man climb over the balcony railing and come sliding carefully down one of the posts, not six feet away.

When the man was nearly to the ground, Nebraska stepped across swiftly and brought his gun-barrel down on the man's head. He was taking no chances on Johnny Wayne.

"Got you!" grunted the sheriff triumphantly, whipping out his handcuffs. Clawing around in the dark, he got the man's wrists and locked them together around the post.

Panting a little, but exulting over his good fortune, Nebraska went around to the front door, where he knocked loudly. When there was no answer, he hammered loudly with the butt of his gun. After a few moments he heard a voice—

rather querulous, he thought—and Mrs. Telford opened the door. She seemed very pale and not in very good humor.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Nolan?" she asked. "I—I was lying down in my room. I wonder where Jean is. She should have answered—"

"Here I am, Mother," said Jean as she came into the room. "I was getting a breath of fresh air. It seemed so stuffy in here."

Nebraska grinned sourly.

"It is a little close," he admitted, looking around.

"Did you want to see us?" Jean asked.

Nebraska grinned at her and rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"You had company tonight, didn't you?" he asked.

"Company? Why, I—I don't understand, Mr. Nolan."

"Oh, yes, you do," he said grimly. "Johnny Wayne came to see you."

"Johnny Wayne?" exclaimed Mrs. Telford. "Out here? Impossible! He wouldn't dare."

"All right," nodded Nebraska. "I'll take you out and show him to you."

Nebraska picked up the lamp and started to the rear of the house, followed by the two women. He swung open the back door and stepped out into the patio.

"Right over here," he told them. "He's locked to the—My God!"

"Why—it is Mr. Acker!" exclaimed Mrs. Telford. "His head is bleeding and his hands are—"

"Why did you do this to him?" asked Jean. Nebraska looked at her, and he could read the triumph in her eyes. She was laughing at him. Carefully he unlocked the handcuffs and put them in his pocket. Sam Acker sat up, holding his head in his hands.

They helped him to his feet and led him into the kitchen, where Mrs. Telford bathed his head with cold water. Gradually he recovered. He looked accusingly at Jean, but shut his lips tightly.

"Well," said the exasperated sheriff, "what in the devil was you slidin' down that porch post for, anyway?"

"I was going for help," replied Acker painfully.

"Help to do what?"

"To capture Johnny Wayne."

"Yea-a-ah? You was, eh? Where was Johnny Wayne?"

"Here—in this house. I was up in my room, reading, when I heard voices. My door was not closed, and I distinctly heard Johnny Wayne's name used, and I heard his voice. I—I didn't care to meet him; so I came out on the balcony and slid down, intending to go for assistance."

"You shore done real well," sighed the sheriff. "I seen Johnny go in the front door of this house—but I never seen him leave."

"Jean," said Mrs. Telford weakly, "was Johnny Wayne here tonight?"

"He came through here," replied the girl. "When you called to me, asking about some certain noise, we turned the lamp down and slipped out into the patio."

"You did, eh?" grunted the sheriff. "And you saw me make a fool of myself out there in the dark."

"We wasn't sure just what did happen," said Jean, trying not to laugh. "Johnny said you were probably making your daily mistake."

"Oh, he did, eh? I—I'm sorry I didn't get him. Are you all right, Acker? Yeah? Oh, I reckon you'll be all right. Good night."

Nebraska Nolan turned and walked heavily out of the house.

"Jean, I don't know what to say," declared Mrs. Telford.

"Then let's not talk about it, Mother. You see, I still believe in Johnny Wayne."

AT about the same time that Nebraska Nolan was leaving the Box T ranch, Shorty McGill and Sody Sims rode down into Cinco Encinas Valley, searching in the dark for the shack of Old Juan, Finally the flickering light of a candle guided them, and they dismounted.

Sody went straight toward the doorway; but Shorty halted to tighten his saddle-girth, which was so loose that the saddle nearly turned when he dismounted. He was still at his horse as Sody entered the shack; when Shorty turned from his horse, he stopped short. He heard the sound of creaking saddles, the thud of running feet.

A moment later several men shoved into the shack. Old Juan and Sody were in there, talking, and were almost knocked down by the sudden rush of armed men. There were Bill Spears, Nick Larimore, Ben Black, Lou Russell and Tom Chase.

"What the hell's goin' on here?" gasped Sody. "Take that gun out of my bosom, Larimore, or I'll—"

"You'll do what?" snapped Larimore.

"Have a sore spot, prob'ly."

"Where's Johnny Wayne?" demanded Spears. "And don't lie, Sims."

"I wish I knew," replied Sody. "He wasn't here when I came."

"He wasn't, eh?" Spears turned on Old Juan.

"Where's Johnny Wayne?"

"No here," replied Juan. "He go 'way *la tarde*."

"This afternoon, eh? growled Larimore. "He'll come back, eh?"

"*Quien sabe?* He say notheeng."

"Well, I reckon that's that," grunted Spears. "It's a cinch he won't come back, not with all of us millin' around here. What are you doin' down here, Sims?"

"Lookin' for Johnny," replied Sody honestly.

Spears looked malevolently at Sody for several moments, but turned to his men.

"All right, boys," he growled, "let's go."

They filed out and headed for their horses. Sody went to the doorway, and Shorty called softly:

"Hurry up, dang it!"

Sody joined him and they went quickly to their horses. In a few moments they were riding swiftly away, while from behind them came a crescendo of violent profanity.

"What happened?" asked Sody, as they galloped across the little valley, heading northward.

"I'll learn that bunch of kidnapers to mind their own damn business," replied Shorty. "While they argued with you and Juan, I unsaddled and turned every danged one of their horses loose. A ten-mile walk may not put any brains in their thick heads, but it'll shore put blisters on their feet. And a forty-pound saddle gets mighty heavy, long about six, eight miles."

"There are times, Shorty," chuckled Sody, "when you show so much intelligence that I'd almost bet your ancestors' names was Sims, instead of McGill. You'll prob'bly get us both killed, but we'll die laughin'."

"Yeah, I reckon," agreed Shorty soberly. "But all this ain't doin' a thing to prove that Johnny didn't kill Telford."

"You don't happen to have any good idea, do you, Shorty?"

"Yeah, I've got one," Shorty admitted, "but I'm scared that when I try to start it goin', I'll find a lot of springs busted in the darn thing."

"Mebbe I could help you."

"Mebbe you can, Sody—but not yet. This idea of mine is so young that it's still wearin' three-cornered pants."

SODY sent Chico to town next morning for groceries, and the little Mexican nearly ran the legs off his horse, getting back to the ranch—without the groceries.

"They keel Johnnee-e-e las' night!" he yelled at Shorty.

Sody came running to the doorway, where Shorty had Chico by the shirt, and was shaking him, like a terrier shaking a rat.

"They killed Johnny?" wailed Sody. "Quit shakin' him, Shorty!"

"*Madre de Dios!*" wailed Chico. "Queet shaking!"

"Nobody's shakin' you," growled Shorty. "Talk sense. Who killed Johnny?"

"Theese damn Box T *vaqueros,*" panted Chico. "I hear talking een town. Somebodee ees stealing their horses, so they send one man for new horses, and the odders wait and catch Johnnee-e-e."

"Mother of Mud!" gasped Sody. "You had a swell idea, Shorty, when you cut their broncs adrift. Waited for him, eh?"

"*Si, si!* Rossell, hees got bullet in hees shoulder, and these Ben Black, hees got bullet t'rough hees leg."

"Johnny put up a fight," groaned Shorty. "Where's the body, Chico?"

"W'at body?" queried Chico blankly.

"Johnny's body, you bughead!"

"Oh! I guess hees got eet weeth heem."

"Who's got it with him?"

"Johnnee-e-e."

"But you said that Johnny is dead."

Chico scratched his head thoughtfully.

"Maybe he ees not keeled for dead—yet. I'm hearing he ees shot t'rough the head. The put heem in jail, and I theenk he is dying pretty queek."

"They don't put dyin' men in jail!" snorted Sody.

Chico shrugged his shoulders.

"I never see heem dying," he admitted, "and I'm never see heem leeving—today. Theese damn shoriff saying nobody can talk to heem."

"Can't, eh?" grunted Shorty. "Hang on yore gun, Sody; I'll saddle the horses. We're goin' on the war-path."

Sunday was usually a very dull day in Ocotillo Bend, but this was an exception. Apparently there was considerable excitement, when Shorty and Sody rode in and dismounted in front of the sheriff's office. Nebraska Nolan, the sheriff, came from the office, and looked grimly at the two men from the Bar W.

"I know what yo're goin' to ask," he told them, "but it's no use. Johnny Wayne ain't receivin' visitors."

"Uh-huh," grunted Shorty. "How bad was he hurt, Nebraska?"

"Not much. A bullet creased his hard head, thasall."

"Got all his senses now?" queried Sody.

"If he ever had any," nodded Nebraska. "That's a doubtful point. Lou Russell got shot in the shoulder, and Ben Black got a forty-five through the calf of his leg. They're down at the doctor's bein' fixed up. And if I was you two rannahans, I'd keep plumb away from the rest of the Box T boys."

"It's a wonder to me that you ain't teachin' Sunday school," said Shorty. "Lookin' after our morals thataway, Nebrasky. Did you ever stop to think that them snake-hunters kidnaped him out of Mexico?"

"I didn't question them none to speak about," replied Nebraska.

"You wouldn't," said Sody grimly. "What's to be done now?"

"If you ask me," sighed the sheriff, "I'd say for you to go home and stay home. I'll have my hands full, tryin' to save Johnny for the law, without tryin' to ride herd on you gallinippers."

Shorty's jaw snapped tight for a moment.

"You don't mean—they'd lynch Johnny?" he asked.

"I'm plumb scared they might try. You see, Telford was a big man in this country. Lotsa folks had money in that bank, and they think Johnny was the third man in that robbery. Acker says he don't believe the bank can make the grade—not after that loss."

"Would the bank go busted on fifteen thousand dollars?"

"Acker says it's nearer twenty-five thousand."

Fuzzy Rugg came from the office doorway and grinned at Shorty and Sody.

"What do you think of the news?" he asked.

"Not very much," admitted Shorty. "How's Johnny?"

"Purty good," drawled Fuzzy. "I was jist back there talkin' to him. He was tellin' me about Nebrasky pettin' Sam Acker over the head last night with a gun, thinkin' it was him. I wondered why Sam had a bandage on his head this mornin'. How about it, Nebrasky?"

The sheriff's face was brick-red, as he whirled on his deputy.

"Go back there in the office and mind yore own business!"

"Then it *was* true. I didn't know whether to laugh or not. Now I can go back and laugh with Johnny. He thought it was funny."

"When you see him," said Shorty, "you tell him for us that we're doin' everything we can for him, Fuzzy."

"Is it all right to tell him that, Nebrasky?" asked Fuzzy.

"If I said it wasn't, you'd tell him, anyway; so go ahead."

Fuzzy hurried back into the office.

"So you mistook Sam Acker for Johnny, eh?" grinned Sody.

"I don't reckon we need to discuss that," replied the sheriff stiffly. "Keep away from that Box T outfit, or I'll have a lot more of you in jail."

The sheriff stalked back into his office, and the two men went up the street. At the front of the postoffice they met John Harper, the prosecutor, who seemed in high spirits.

"Well, boys, we got him," he said jovially. "You can't keep away from the law."

"The law didn't get him," retorted Shorty.

"The law has him now, however; and I'm very much afraid that Johnny Wayne is in a tough spot. I expect a full confession from him very soon."

"The hell you do!" Sody snorted. "You expect a confession and the sheriff expects a lynchin'. Yo're a fine pair of expectors."

John Harper smiled. "I admire your loyalty, boys. Did you hear that John Wayne crippled two of the Box T boys?"

"Too danged bad he didn't kill the whole works," growled Shorty. "But you can't blame Johnny for that. They wasn't officers of the law—and it happened in Mexico."

"That shooting last night has nothing to do with the case. Our law has no jurisdiction over what happens in Mexico."

"I reckon I'll do all my killin' down there after this," said Sody soberly. "Have you talked with Johnny?"

"I'm going down there now. Any message?"

"Yeah," drawled Shorty. "Tell him that if any lawyer tries to git him to talk, tell 'em to go to hell."

"I'll think it over, McGill," said Harper soberly.

"It's straight from the heart," declared Shorty.

Harper laughed and walked on. Shorty and Sody peered through the windows of the closed bank, merely out of curiosity.

"Sam Acker's stayin' out at the Box T, I reckon," said Sody. "I wonder if Fuzzy was jokin' about the sheriff knockin' him out, thinkin' he was Johnny."

"I hope not," replied Shorty thoughtfully. His eyes were narrowed in deep thought, and he tugged at one end of his mustache.

"You ort to git them things cut off," said Sody. "Somebody might use 'em to strangle you with. Anyway, I'd hate to have a lot of hair hangin' down past my food thataway. What's eatin' you, anyway?"

"Sody," whispered Shorty, "I'm jist about to have an idea!"

"And me without any smellin'-salts!" gasped Sody. "Keep yore chin up, cowboy, and nobody will suspect you. Is it sudden, or somethin' that's been growin' on you?"

"Wait a minute!" whispered Shorty. "Yeah—yeah—yeah—"

"Wind on yore stummick, pardner?"

Shorty drew a deep breath and straightened up.

"Let's go home," he said quietly. "I believe I've got it."

"Yeah, that's right, too. If yo're goin' to have a physical and mental breakdown, you better be at home."

CHAPTER IV

RECKONING DAY

MRS. TELFORD, Jean and Sam Acker were having a late breakfast at the Box T. The two crippled cowboys had been moved out to the ranch and installed in the bunkhouse. Breakfast proved rather a dismal affair, because none of them felt like talking. Mrs. Telford said:

"The bank examiner comes today, Sam?"

Acker nodded absently.

"Isn't it rather unusual for them to announce their coming?" asked Jean.

"Ordinarily—yes. But in the case of a robbery—that is different."

Bill Spears, the foreman, had been to town, and came in with the mail, most of which he gave to Mrs. Telford, but he flipped one letter to Sam Acker. Acker glanced at it curiously.

"Rather peculiar—getting mail in care of the ranch," he said, and opened the letter.

His brows drew down in a scowl as he read the first few lines. Jean was watching him curiously, and she saw every vestige of color drain from his face. He did not look up. Slowly he folded up the letter, got up from the table, and with a mumbled apology left the room.

One of the boys had hitched up a buggy outfit for him, and left it at the front porch. Acker went straight through the main room, picked up his hat and went outside, where he drove swiftly away.

Mrs. Telford, busy with her own mail, did not notice anything wrong with Acker. But it puzzled Jean. He had looked as though he had seen a ghost.

He tied his horse near the front of the bank, went inside and locked the door behind him. The bank examiner was coming by stage, and would not arrive for an hour or more. Asher went back to his desk, where he sat down, placed the letter on his desk and read it over again. It said:

> Dear Sir, yu say I got $25,000. Alrite I want that mutch. Take the rest of the muny, put it in a sak and leeve it inside old adobe shak on rode to Bar T. Leeve muny in sak and put it in old adobe tonite or I'll write a note to sheriff and tell him all I know. Yu cant git away with no lies.
>
> The 3rd Man.

"Some damned blackmailer," groaned Acker wearily. Suddenly he lifted his head. Someone was knocking on the front door. Through the glass he could see John Harper. Putting the letter in his pocket, he let the prosecutor into the bank.

"You look kinda peaked, Sam," said Harper. "Too much trouble and worry,

eh? You ought to take a trip after this is settled."

"I—I think I will," said Acker. "I'm rather upset. The examiner will be here today, and we will try and straighten things out. What has Wayne had to say?"

"Not a word. Refuses to discuss the murder, and laughs at the idea of him being mixed up in this robbery. Of course, we can't pin that on him, but we feel sure we can convict him of murder."

"Yes, I'm sure you can," agreed Acker. His hands trembled as he shifted some papers on his desk.

"You certainly are nervous," observed Harper.

"It has been tough," declared Acker. "I need a rest—and a change."

"Why not?" smiled Harper. "How is this for an idea: marry Jean Telford, and go away for a honeymoon?"

Acker smiled sourly. "I'm afraid not, Harper."

"Telford wanted you to marry her, I understood."

"Yes, I believe he did. But—but Jean has definite notions of her own. Although I hate to say it, she still likes Johnny Wayne, and doesn't believe he is guilty."

"I understand he was out there."

Acker caressed his sore head. "Yes, I believe he was."

"What was this story about the sheriff knocking you down, Sam?"

"The fool!" Acker flared angrily. "He mistook me for Wayne."

"That's what I heard. You were going for help when he knocked you out—and, in the excitement, Wayne escaped."

"Something like that," admitted Acker sourly. "If you'll excuse me, I'll get back to my work."

The bank examiner arrived on the stage, and immediately went to work with Acker on the books of the bank.

Acker ate supper in town that evening, and they worked late. After the bank examiner went to the hotel, Acker secured a canvas sack, into which he stuffed some newspapers. He placed the sack in the buggy together with a shotgun, and drove slowly out of town. There was no moon, but the starlight was bright.

The old adobe was only a few feet off the road, being merely a ruin, with no door nor window. Acker drove over to the front, and tossed the sack through the window. Then he whipped the horse and drove swiftly away around a nearby turn, where he quickly tied the horse, took the shotgun and hurried back to the rear of the adobe.

Crouched in the mesquite, he waited at least an hour, but no one came and the silence was unbroken. Finally he went slowly over to the adobe, lighted a match and peered inside.

The sack was gone.

Cursing softly, Acker went back to the buggy and untied the horse. His ruse had failed. As he climbed into the buggy he found an envelope on the seat. It was sealed but without address. Not wishing to read by lamplight, he put the letter in his pocket and went on to the ranch. Sitting down in his room, he read the penciled note, which read:

> Dear Sir, you are a fool. Shotguns was not mentioned in my orders. This is my last warning. Put that muny in same place tomorrow nite. I kno who killed Henry Telford.
>
> The 3rd Man.

Acker kicked himself mentally for ever paying any attention to that first letter. Why didn't he take the letter to John Harper, or to the sheriff? Someone was trying to bluff him into paying blackmail. He put the letter in his pocket and went downstairs, meeting Mrs. Telford in the main room.

"We accomplished a lot of work today," he told her. "I believe we will

finish tomorrow afternoon, and unless we can raise at least twenty-five thousand in cash, the bank must remain closed."

"Is it as bad as that?" she asked anxiously.

"It is just that bad, Mrs. Telford. Your husband loaded up on local security, from which we can't hope to realize for a long time. A lot of negotiable bonds are missing, which the robbers took; all in all, the outlook is very bad."

"What would you suggest?" she asked.

"I don't know," replied Acker wearily. "My nerves are so bad that I can't think clearly. If we finish in time, I believe I'll take the evening stage, go to Phoenix and try to get help. I'll have a fairly complete report from the examiner. It might be a good move."

"I wish you could do it," replied Mrs. Telford. "I don't want to see any one lose money through our bank."

"No, we don't want that to happen. I believe I'll go—if we finish our work in time to get that stage."

CHICO and Jonah were in the bunkhouse that evening when Fuzzy Rugg, the deputy, came surging in, looking very excited.

"Where's Shorty and Sody?" he demanded.

"I theenk they are een town," replied Chico.

"Hell!" snorted Fuzzy. "They might be, at that; I never thought to look."

"W'at ees wrong?" queried Jonah.

"Plenty. Nebrasky's gone down to Stony Creek to serve some papers, and he won't be back tonight. Damn the luck, I may need help."

"W'at kind of help is this you are needing?" queried Chico.

"Aw, I wouldn't ask you fellers. It'd be different with Shorty and Sody. There's a gang in town, workin' up guts enough to ram a hole in the jail and lynch Johnny Wayne. Mebbe I was a fool to come out here, leavin' things unprotected; but I need help."

"W'y you don't take heem away?" asked Chico.

"And have 'em take him away from me? No, it means a fight—one man against twenty."

"That ees tough," agreed Chico. "How 'bout leetle dreenk tequila?"

"I shore could use one," replied the deputy, who had a weakness for tequila.

Jonah pulled a jug from under his bed and placed it on the table.

"Wait meenit," said Chico. "I get heem clean glass."

Chico went out quickly, and came back with a water glass, which he nearly filled for the deputy. He and Jonah drank from tin cups.

"Man, that shore tasted good!" gasped Fuzzy. He sat down wearily in a broken-back chair and began rolling a cigarette.

"If Shorty and—what the hell—" Fuzzy spilled his tobacco on the floor, rubbed his eyes and looked completely bewildered. He tried to put a hand up to his face, but it fell away, dangling limply. Then he slid out of the chair and sprawled on the floor.

"*Madre de Dios!*" gasped Jonah. "Wa't ees wrong weeth Fozzy?"

Chico, wide-eyed, licked his lips and tried to grin. Then he stepped over, searched Fuzzy's pockets and drew out the jail keys.

"W'at ees theese you are doing?" wailed Jonah. "He ees *muerto?*"

"He ees not dead," declared Chico. "My cousin een Nogales, who ees a bartender, geeve me thees stoff long time ago. Hees say that man weel sleep damn good for five, seex hour. Come weeth me."

"Theese ees torrible," wailed Jonah. "For theese monkey beesness you maybe get rope right around my damn neck."

"Shut off!" snapped Chico. "Go saddle

horse. Theese ees no time for crying—theese ees time for doing sometheeng."

Chico and Jonah had been gone less than an hour, when Shorty and Sody came home. They unsaddled their horses and came up to the bunkhouse, where a lamp was burning. Fuzzy was stretched out on the floor, snooring heavily, and there was a smell of tequila in the air.

"If that ain't purty, I'll eat yore hat!" exploded Shorty, as they looked down at the deputy sheriff.

"Sizzled to the brows," agreed Sody dryly. "Do you suppose that jackass tried to drink tequila with Chico and Jonah?"

"It shore looks like it. He-e-y! Fuzzy! Wake up!"

"No use shakin' him any more," said Shorty, when that expedient failed to even cause Fuzzy to alter his snoring tempo. "I wonder where them two nut-headed Mexicans are. Mebbe they ran out of tequila and went for a fresh supply."

"No, they didn't—there's their jug. I took a drink out of it this afternoon. Damned if I believe they've used much of it."

"Well, Fuzzy's shore had plenty."

"And then a few extra," added Sody thoughtfully. "Shorty, don't it strike you kinda funny that Fuzzy'd be out here drunk thataway, when he's got a important prisoner in jail? Nebrasky will shore give him hell for this. And where's them Mexicans, anyway?"

"It's got me fightin' my hat. C'mon."

They went down to the stable, where an investigation disclosed the fact that both Mexican's horses and riding-rigs were gone.

"All right," grunted Shorty, "we're headin' for town. Somethin' has gone wrong; and the answer ain't out here."

Quickly they saddled and rode away to Ocotillo Bend. The sheriff's office and the jail, which was behind the office, were at the near end of the street, as they rode in. The moon was up now, flooding the street with light. Two masked men stepped out from opposite sides of the street, covering the two riders with shotguns.

"Just hold fast!" gritted one of them. "You've gone far enough."

"What the hell's this—a holdup right in town?" asked Shorty.

"Can't nobody go out nor come in until we've finished our job."

"And keep yore hands on yore saddle-horns, where I can see 'em," warned the other man tensely.

Suddenly they heard a crash, and the sound of splintering boards. It came from behind the jail.

"That'll be the door," said one of the men.

"My Gawd!" gasped Sody. "Shorty, they're breakin' the jail down!"

"Keep yore hands still!"

Shorty cursed bitterly. "Where's that cat-gutted sheriff? Is he goin' to let a mob hang that kid?"

The men with the shotguns were eagle-eyed now. They knew that if they relaxed for a moment, Shorty and Sody would go for their guns. They could hear the mob inside the jail now, a roar of voices. Then the sheriff's office door was flung open, and men came out on the sidewalk. One of them cursed viciously. A man came slowly out to where Shorty and Sody were held. He was masked, too.

"All right, boys," he said quietly.

"Get him?" asked one of the shotgun men.

"The damn place was empty. The sheriff must have foxed us."

"All right, you fellers," said a gunman. "It'd be a lot better for all concerned, if you turned right around and went home."

"Well, thank you very much," said Shorty. "I've enjoyed yore company a lot. I hope we meet again, when you ain't ashamed to show yore damn faces."

Swinging their horses around, they

galloped back to the ranch, wondering where Nebraska Nolan had taken Johnny, but mighty thankful that he had been removed from the Ocotillo jail.

They found Chico and Jonah in the bunkhouse. They had placed the sleeping deputy on a bunk. Jonah was playing solitaire, while Chico tried to coax a tune from a three-string guitar.

"*Buenas noches,*" greeted Chico gravely. "How ees everytheeng?"

"Purty good," drawled Shorty. He looked at Fuzzy for several moments and turned to Chico.

"Too much tequila?" he asked quietly.

Chico shrugged his shoulder, as he carefully tuned a string.

"Theese Fozzy ees not ver' strong," said Chico. "Hees tak' one dreenk tequila and hees dead from the worl'."

"Been that way for a couple hours, eh?"

"*Quien sabe?*"

"All right. He comes here, takes one drink and passed out. You two saddled yore horses and went away. What's it all about?"

"We know notheeng, hear notheeng, see notheeng, say notheeng."

"You'll say something, or I'll unscrew both yore ears. Why did Fuzzy come out here?"

"Well, hees say theese shoriff gone to Stony Creek. Hees say somebodee ees going to 'ang Johnee-e-e, and hees wan' you and Sody to come help heem."

"The hell he did! Why—wait a minute."

Shorty blinked thoughtfully, his eyes boring into Chico. He turned, got to his feet and searched Fuzzy's pockets until he found the keys. He put them back, looked queerly at Chico, but said nothing.

"I am theenking that the least ees said, the soonest eet ees sewed up," explained Chico.

"Yeah, that's right," agreed Shorty quietly, "but I don't mind tellin' the whole world that I'm buildin' up a hell of a lot of affection for a couple of Mexicans."

"I DIDN'T do no such a damn thing!" exploded Fuzzy Rugg, facing an exasperated sheriff and a very grave prosecutor in the sheriff's office next afternoon.

"I had a hunch what was goin' to happen. You was away, and I knowed I couldn't stand off a gang alone; so I went out to git Shorty and Sody to help me. They wasn't at the ranch. Them two Mexicans was there, and we all had a glass of tequila."

"Glass!" sneered the sheriff. "Since when did one glass of tequila put you to sleep for hours?"

"Last night," admitted Fuzzy sheepishly.

"And there you are, John," said the sheriff. "Jail doors smashed, prisoner gone—and the cell locked. Not a bar sawed on the window—and the keys in Fuzzy's pocket. Figure that one out—I can't."

"Even at that," sighed Fuzzy, "it stopped a lynchin'."

"It would be difficult to prove," said the lawyer, "but I have a feeling that Fuzzy got something strong in his tequila. After he was asleep, they took his keys, released Johnny Wayne—and put the keys back in his pocket."

"I was thinkin' that myself," said Fuzzy.

"Don't lie!" snapped the sheriff. "You never think."

"Anyway, that's my theory," said the lawyer.

"If I thought they did, I'd—"

And just at that moment, in walked Shorty and Sody.

"*Buenas tardes,*" grinned Shorty pleasantly. "We jist dropped in to congratulate you, Nebrasky. It was shore a smart move."

"Smart move?" Nebraska glared at Shorty. "What move?"

"Why—takin' Johnny Wayne away, ahead of the attempt to lynch him. You shore showed good sense."

"Why, you—I—I—" Nebraska choked with emotion.

"That's all right," assured Shorty, patting him on the shoulder. "I believe in givin' the devil his due. I was jist sayin' to Sody, 'That Nebraska Nolan shore has got brains. Lotsa folks don't appreciate him, but I do. I recognize good old horse-sense.' "

"You think yo're damn smart!" exploded Nebraska. "Comin' in here and —oh, hell, I'd like to—"

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Shorty. "I—we didn't expect anythin' like that. All we wanted was to be in on the hand-shakin', you know. What's eatin' you, Nebrasky?"

"You know danged well!"

"Looks t' me like another case of worms," said Sody.

For the first time today Fuzzy was enjoying things.

"As a matter of fact, boys," informed Harper, "the sheriff did not take Johnny Wayne away. Somebody let him out of jail."

"Let him out?" gasped Shorty. "You mean—he's escaped?"

"You know damn well he escaped!" roared Nebrasky.

"You must think I'm the seventh son of a seventh son—or somethin'," grinned Shorty. "And you don't need to shout —I'm not deaf."

"Nebrasky, you act like you was sorry the mob didn't git him," said Sody. "You ort to be ashamed of yourself. What kind of a way is that to be actin'?"

"Git out of here and stay out!" roared Nebraska. "I don't want to see any of you in here again—unless yore under arrest."

"Now you've hurt our feelin's," sighed Shorty, as they went to the doorway. "If you watch real close, you'll see us break down and cry. I've never been so upset in our life—have I, Sody? You never seen me like this before, didja? You certainly haven't. Good-by, you hard-hearted old gentleman."

Chuckling mirthfully, they went up the street and crossed over to the Cactus Saloon, where they found Amos Ryker, the driver, who would take out the evening stage. Amos and the bartended had been discussing the Ocotillo Bank, in which Amos had three hundred dollars.

"She's the first money I ever saved," wailed Amos, "and now look at it!"

"You can't look at it, Amos," reminded Shorty.

"That's the hell of it. Do you think it'll ever open agin?"

"Ask Acker."

"I did. He said for me not to expect too much. I was talkin' to him a while ago. He shore feels awful bad about it. I think he's ridin' north with me t'night —headin' for Phoenix. Said mebbe he could find some bank up there that'd help him out.

"He wasn't sure about goin', though. Said he'd have to go back to the ranch, after he gits all finished at the bank, and then have one of the boys take him down to the old adobe, where I can pick him up."

"Oh, yeah," nodded Shorty.

Just beyond the old adobe the Box T road branched off the main road.

"I shore hope he can git help," sighed Amos. "I'd hate to lose my life savin's."

"Well, I'll buy a drink," said Shorty. "It'll brace you up, in case he don't get help in Phoenix."

"I shore need bracin'," grinned the driver. "Every cent I own, wiped out clean—and me havin' old age creepin' onto me. Well, here's to petrified tonsils."

After the drink, Shorty and Sody walked out on the street. John Harper was coming toward his office, and the two cowboys joined him. The lawyer

looked upon them with misgivings, until Shorty said:

"Harper, I'd like to talk seriously with you for a while. Me and Shorty don't usually talk sense to anybody, but this is straight goods."

"All right," smiled the lawyer. "Come up to my office—and give me a look at those straight goods."

Thirty minutes later Harper walked down the stairs with them.

"I think you are crazy, McGill," he declared. "But," he smiled slowly. "we are all crazy, more or less, I suppose."

"Too much thinkin,' I reckon," replied Shorty seriously.

"Too much strain on an undeveloped organ," said Sody. "I shore watch myself all the time. We'll see you later, Mr. Harper."

THE last rays of sunset bathed the tallest peaks of the Ocotillo range. The valley was all in shadow now, and a cool breeze rustled the leaves of the gnarled sycamore beside the old adobe.

Shorty McGill, riding slowly and alone, came from toward Ocotillo Bend. He drew rein near the adobe and looked down the road toward town. Then he turned and studied the adobe for several moments before riding off the road near the doorway.

He got slowly out of the saddle, not over ten feet from the doorway, dropped his reins and took several steps back toward the road, looking toward town.

Without a sound, Sam Acker stepped into the doorway, a double-barrel shotgun in his hands, and without any warning he lifted the heavy gun and fired both barrels straight at Shorty's back.

The shock of the double load staggered Acker, but he jerked quickly ahead, dropping the shotgun on the ground. Shorty McGill was face-down on the ground, arms outspread. Acker stared, wide-eyed at the limp body, his hands clenching and unclenching at his sides.

He knew that the stage would be along soon. Something must be done with that body. The horse had jerked aside and was moving away. Acker had a sudden inspiration. He ran out, grasped the reins and led the horse up to the body of its master.

Then he reached down, grasped Shorty in his arms and tried to lift him. Acker was not a strong man. Purple of face, fighting frantically against time he surged and tugged.

"Well, you've got a nice evenin' for it," drawled a voice behind him.

Acker had the body almost up to the saddle, but at the voice he let loose and staggered backwards, turning as quickly as possible.

Just outside the doorway stood Sody Sims, Nebraska Nolan, Fuzzy Rugg and John Harper. Acker stood there wide-eyed, jaw-sagging, his face as white as wood-ashes. He tried to speak, but it was only a queer noise. John Harper had Acker's valise in his hand.

"Yo're quite a killer, Acker," said Sody quietly. "Don't give a feller much chance for his white chips, do you."

"He—he—" panted Acker. "Oh—God!"

"You gave Shorty what you gave Henry Telford," said Sody.

"No, no, I—I—"

"I know. You hired Buck and Ed La Due to murder him."

"I—I didn't hire them," panted Acker. "They—they—"

"Well, go ahead."

"They killed him," choked Acker. "I didn't—"

"You stole from the bank and Telford found it out," said John Harper. "You faced ruin and disgrace; so you hired the La Due boys to murder him. In turn, you were to let them rob the bank—but you double-crossed them, and murdered them. There wasn't any third man, Acker—except yourself. You

got the money—and tonight you were leaving the country—with the money."

Acker tried to grin, but it was only a queer grimace.

"Quite a story," he said huskily. "Now, I'll tell one. You see—"

From beneath his coat Acker jerked out a Colt revolver. None of the men had anticipated such a move. In fact, they never imagined for a moment that Acker carried a gun, until it was out, covering them.

"Drop your guns!" he snapped. "Unbuckle your belts and let them drop. Did you think I was fool enough to play the game I've been playing, and not be prepared? Fling that valise out here, Harper.

"This fool of a McGill furnishes me a horse, and before you can start on my trail, I'll be in Mexico. Keep your hands away from that gun, Sims. I'd sooner shoot you than not. Maybe I will. Might as well make a clean sweep before I go.

"I don't know where you got all the information, but it's true. I used eight thousand dollars worth of bank money. In that valise is twelve thousand in currency and twenty thousand dollars worth of negotiable bonds. Oh, I won't starve. Don't move, or I'll—"

From behind him a forty-five sent a smashing echo against the old adobe wall, and the Colt went spinning from Acker's broken hand. A moment later Sody Sims dived into the shocked Acker, driving him to the ground.

Shorty McGill was sitting up, his smoking revolver dangling loosely in his hand across his chap-clad knee. Sody jerked Acker to a sitting position, where he stared goggle-eyed at the man he had recently murdered.

"Thasall right, Sammy," smiled Shorty. "I found that shotgun cached in there today, and I took the shot out of the shells."

"Dang you, Shorty, I thought you wasn't never going to down him!" exclaimed Sody.

"Well, I had to wait until he admitted things, didn't I? What more didja want?"

Shorty got to his feet and whistled three times. All the others looked curiously at Shorty, except Sody, who merely grinned.

Pushing through the mesquite thicket across the road came Johnny Wayne, Chico Lopez and Jonah Topete.

"It worked, Johnny," crowed Shorty. "He confessed the whole works, and we've got back most of the bank's money."

"Man!" exclaimed Johnny. "That's shore music to me."

"It is music to all of us, Wayne," declared the prosecutor. "I want to congratulate you, boy. It was a narrow squeak for you."

"W'at ees a squik?" asked Jonah.

"That ees sometheeng from new boots," explained Chico wisely.

"And now," said the prosecutor, "that everything is settled, would you mind explaining how you happened to suspect Acker, Shorty? We know all about the notes you sent to him, which proved that he wasn't playing a straight game—but what was the beginning?"

"Well, I'll tell you," drawled Shorty. "It happened that evenin' in the bank, after the La Due boys was killed. If you remember, Acker swore he didn't see the faces of any of the robbers. All right. Do you remember that Ed La Due was shot in the face with five of them buckshot?"

"Yeah, he got five of 'em in the face," admitted the sheriff. "But I don't see—"

"All right," drawled Shorty, "I'll betcha I was the only man in the bank who noticed that not a single one of them buckshot went *through* that mask."

"That's right!" blurted the sheriff. "You know, I wondered—"

"No, Nebrasky," interrupted Fuzzy, "don't say it. Honesty is always the best policy."

"Well," Nebraska swallowed heavily, "—all right."

"Here's the stage," said Fuzzy, as the vehicle drew up to them, with Amos Ryker, staring at the group around Sam Acker.

"What happened to my passenger?" he asked.

"He decided to not take the trip," replied Shorty. "We've done convinced him that he ought to go back and put yore life savin's back in the bank where he got it."

"Lovely liniment!" exploded Amos. "Did he have it with him?"

"I reckon so."

"Well, I'm shore obliged to him. Giddap, broncs!"

"Well, we've got to take this whippoorwill to jail," reminded the sheriff. "You take care of that money, John. Goin' in with us, Johnny?"

"I reckon I'll be ridin' out to the Box T," smiled Johnny, "if you'll promise to not come out there."

"I won't—and good luck to you, Johnny. I never did think you was guilty."

Trailing the triumphant party back to Ocotillo Bend came Chico and Jonah.

"The wors' of the whole theeng ees this," complained Jonah: "Everybodee ees theenking how smart ees Shortee McGeel. We got more brain in my head than you ever use, Chico."

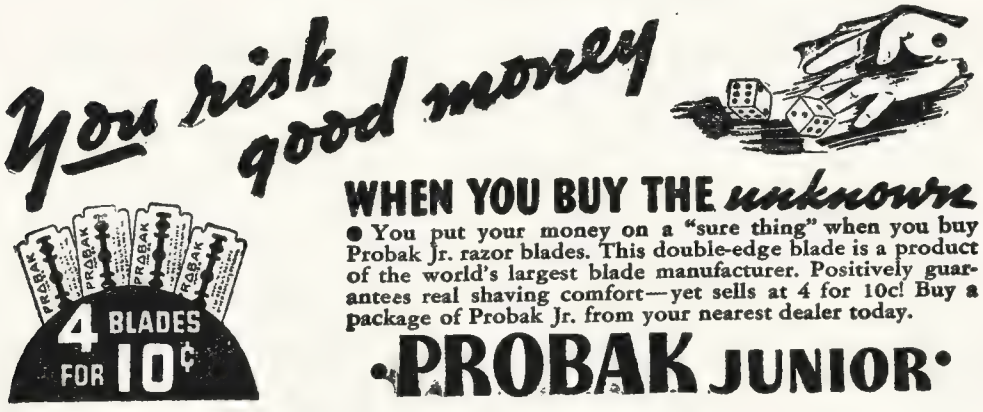
"That ees ver' true," agreed Chico. "But w'at the hell you expec'—brass band? Johnny ees saying to me, 'Chico, weethout you las' night, I am hong so damn high that beeg iggle can't fly up there.' That ees plenty for me. I don' wan' the worl'—I can't use heem."

"Sure," agreed Jonah doubtfully, and after a long silence he said:

"Chico, I'm wonner who keel Henry Telford."

Chico shrugged his shoulders in the darkness.

"That ees sometheeng we weel never onnerstand, Jonah."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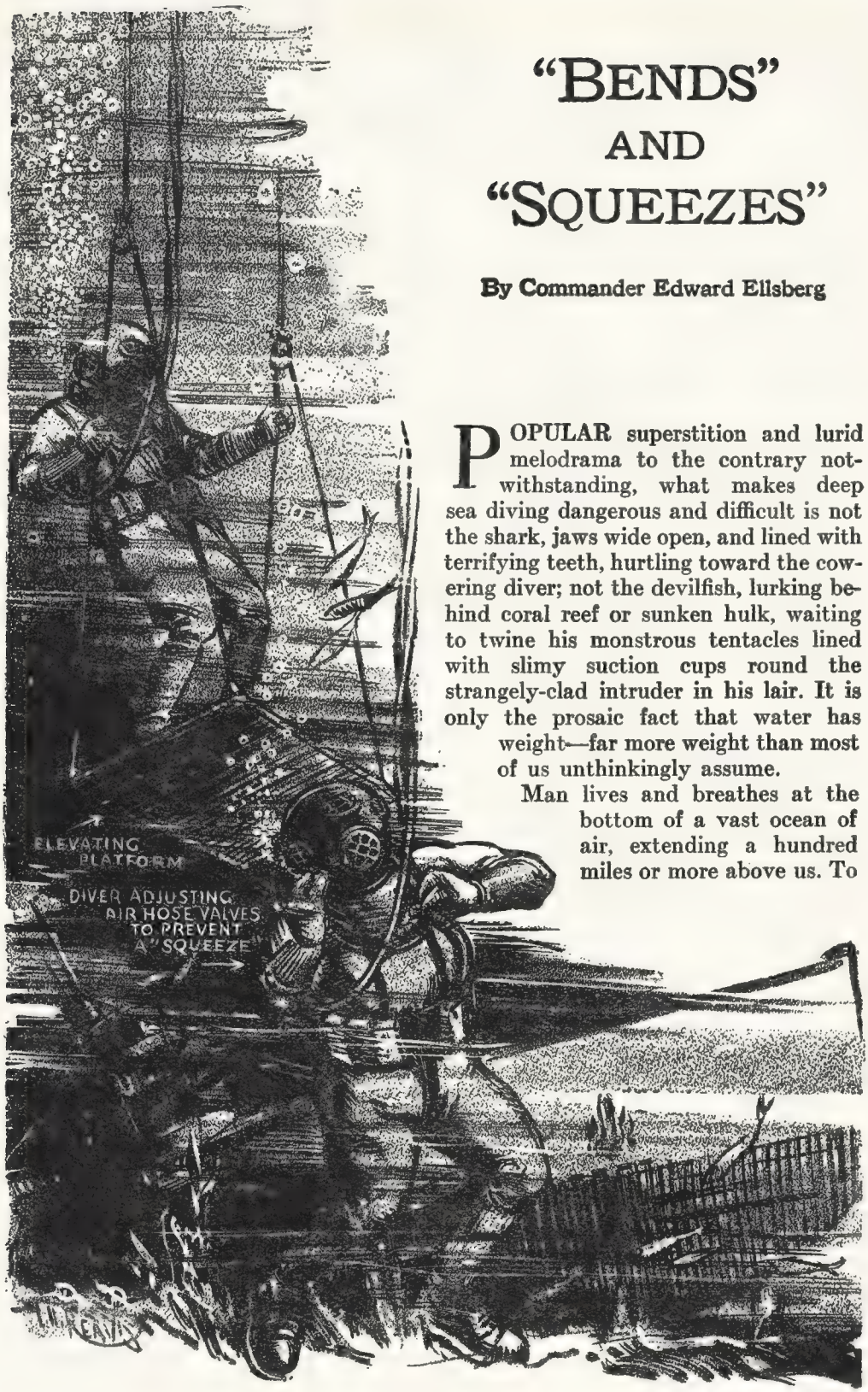
"BENDS" AND "SQUEEZES"

By Commander Edward Ellsberg



POPULAR superstition and lurid melodrama to the contrary notwithstanding, what makes deep sea diving dangerous and difficult is not the shark, jaws wide open, and lined with terrifying teeth, hurtling toward the cowering diver; not the devilfish, lurking behind coral reef or sunken hulk, waiting to twine his monstrous tentacles lined with slimy suction cups round the strangely-clad intruder in his lair. It is only the prosaic fact that water has weight—far more weight than most of us unthinkingly assume.

Man lives and breathes at the bottom of a vast ocean of air, extending a hundred miles or more above us. To

the pressure existing at the bottom of this gaseous ocean, our bodies and our lungs are tuned. On atmosphere this pressure is about fifteen pounds to the square inch, the cumulative weight of a column of air resting on us at sea level, rising (but always thinning out) above our highest mountains into the stratosphere and far beyond.

To decrease this pressure half an atmosphere, it is necessary to rise considerably, approximately to the top of Pike's Peak, fifteen thousand feet. To many people who have ascended the peak, that reduction in pressure of seven pounds per square inch is quite a strain, something to write home about.

To the diver, such a change in pressure is trifling. He can hardly get his feet wet without undergoing greater changes. For water is heavy. A cubic foot of sea water weighs sixty-four pounds and exerts a pressure of .445 pounds over each square inch of its base. The weight of a column of water only thirty-three feet deep equals one atmosphere, enough to balance the weight of all the air from sea level up to the outer most limits of the air blanketing this earth.

A diver, simply by going down fifteen feet, has therefore increased the pressure on his body seven pounds to each square inch, quite as great a change as he could get by rising three miles in the air. But instead of going down only fifteen feet, he may dive one hundred feet, two hundred feet, where the pressure changes are vastly greater. What happens when he does it?

To dive, to stay below some time, and to accomplish some real work on the bottom, requires a diving rig in which a man can both breathe and work. The conventional diving dress, a flexible, canvas-covered, rubber suit joined watertight to a rigid copper helmet, represents so far the only combination which permits both breathing and working. There are two other possibilities—naked diving and completely armored, rigid suits. The naked diver is quite free to move naturally but he can't breathe effectively, so his dive is always brief; the armored suit diver is quite free to breathe naturally but he can't move effectively, so his dive is practically useless.

However, in the regulation diving rig, in spite of its handicaps, down to three hundred feet something can be done and so far, practically all the work ever done below the sea has been done in this dress. But in doing it, the diver has had to stand a lot.

To start with, there is the pressure of the sea. The average man's body has an area of some two thousand square inches; for every foot he descends, an increased load of water of about nine hundred pounds comes on him, nearly half a ton added with each foot. At three hundred feet down, this water pressure is two hundred and seventy thousand pounds—one hundred and thirty-five tons, the weight of a husky locomotive. And the weight is real; there is nothing theoretical about it. It is there on the diver just as much as if he were stretched out on an anvil and that whole locomotive weight somehow concentrated on his body.

Why doesn't it crush him?

Air is the answer—compressed air. As he goes deeper, the diver is fed compressed air through a hose at a pressure which must always slightly exceed the increasing pressure of water. Primarily the air is there for him to breathe, but its purpose is far wider than that. The air under pressure enters his helmet, under the same pressure goes to his lungs. And there in the lungs the pressure of the air is communicated to the blood and by it spread instantly to every part of the body, inflating the body to a pressure high enough to balance off the sea and carry the load, exactly as the air pressure inside a pneumatic tire inflates it and keeps it round, in spite of the load

of the car above pressing down on it.

Here then, compressed air saves the diver, makes it possible for him to breathe and to exist under an otherwise crushing load of water. But for all this there is a price to pay, and compressed air exacts it relentlessly.

Man was never made to breathe air under pressure; queer and unnatural things happen when he does. Many a diver has paid with his life the price of treading the deep ocean floor.

Air has two main constituents. Oxygen, the active ingredient which we must have to sustain life, makes up one-fifth of it. Nitrogen, the inert component, forms practically all the other four-fifths, doing nothing except diluting the air so we do not get too much oxygen with each breath. When we breathe ordinarily, the hemoglobin in the blood, (the red corpuscles) takes up oxygen from the lungs and carries it through the blood stream to the tissues. There it is converted into carbon dioxide, which as a waste product is carried back to be exhaled from the lungs. Nitrogen, the inactive air component, takes no part in these physiological reactions.

But as the diver goes down and the pressure on his lungs goes up, things change. Under the increasing pressure, more and more of the inert nitrogen is forced to dissolve in the blood and is carried by it throughout the body, where the nitrogen is soaked up in varying amounts and at varying rates by the different body tissues. Fat has a great affinity for nitrogen. For that reason fat men make poor divers. Fat will hold five times as much nitrogen as ordinary flesh and gives it up more slowly. The speed and degree of this saturation of the body tissues with nitrogen depend, of course, on the pressure on the diver (the depth at which he is) and the length of time he stays under that pressure. The deeper he goes, the faster he saturates; the longer he stays at any depth, the more nitrogen his tissues soak up.

But this absorption the diver never feels. Other symptoms, due to other causes—dizziness, difficulty in breathing, oxygen exhilaration—may be very marked, but never while he is under pressure will the degree of nitrogen saturation come to his notice or bother him.

But when the time comes to rise and the pressure of the sea comes off, it comes to his notice fast enough. The heavy air pressure required to balance off the pressure of the sea, has forced unnatural quantities of nitrogen into solution in the blood and the tissues; pressure while the diver was on the bottom kept it in solution. Now that the diver has ascended to the surface and the pressure is gone, what are the results?

To the earlier divers, lured into the depths by the hope of fabulous wealth, the results were startling. Convulsions seized the diver, twisted him in a knot. Agonized contortions ensued, the "bends," the expressive term long ago given to this disease. Where exposure had been long and the depth great, death or paralysis ensued; in lesser cases, severe and recurring pains in the joints remained to plague the victim.

THE cause and cure? Not till engineering necessities in caisson work directed medical attention that way, was it solved. The cause is simple and easily demonstrated. A bottle of beer, preferably somewhat warm, best illustrates it. Held up to the light, the unopened bottle is full of a clear amber liquid. There is, however, a gas, carbon dioxide, dissolved under pressure in considerable quantity in that clear liquid—but so long as the bottle cap is in place and the pressure kept on, the observer is as unaware of the presence of that gas as is the diver on the bottom of the nitrogen in his blood.

But once the bottle cap is pulled, conditions change swiftly. With the cap gone, the pressure on the beer is released. The dissolved gas, no longer held by pressure in solution, comes bubbling out, and in a moment under the action of the escaping gas, the beer is frothing and foaming from the neck of the bottle.

In the same way and for the same reason, the identical thing happens in the diver's blood. With the pressure gone, the nitrogen in the blood and tissues comes out of solution and forms bubbles in the blood. If the reduction of pressure is quick enough, as after an immediate ascent from a lengthy dive at considerable depth, the amount of air liberated may be great enough to fill the right side of the heart and cause immediate death, or in certain other cases, to have large bubbles form in the brain or in the spinal column, causing paralysis. In lesser cases, the diver is tortured by bubbles which have lodged at various spots in his anatomy, usually the joints.

When the cause of the "bends" was found, the cure was indicated. Obviously it lay in bringing the diver up slowly from the depths to avoid any sharp decrease of pressure with a resultant liberation of free nitrogen in dangerous quantities; and if trouble showed up nevertheless, in getting the diver back under pressure, either by putting him in a suit and sending him down again, or preferably shoving him inside a tank or "recompression chamber" where he can be put under air pressure to recompress the bubbles, and then properly decompressed afterward.

It was only as recently as 1907 that J. S. Haldane, a scientist working on the problem for the British Admiralty, finally determined the major factors in the "bends," or in medical terms, caisson disease, and worked out the present theory of stage decompression. He observed that at depths of thirty-three feet or less, divers, regardless of length of dive or how quickly they rose, were never bothered by the "bends," though obviously their bodies ultimately must have become saturated with nitrogen under that added pressure of one atmosphere while they worked on the bottom. He deduced from this that, perhaps because blood is a thicker liquid than beer or water, the human body could stand a reduction of pressure of one half without ever allowing nitrogen bubbles large enough to cause trouble to form anywhere in blood or tissue.

Proceeding from that conclusion, he reasoned that regardless of depth of dive, a diver could immediately be brought up to the point where the absolute pressure on him was halved without danger. For instance, a man at three hundred feet (one hundred and forty-eight pounds absolute) could be brought at once to one hundred and thirty-three feet (seventy-four pounds absolute) without danger of "bends."

Working from this principle, he built up a "decompression table" showing the stages and the length of time to be spent at each stage, so that for every depth and for dives of varying periods at that depth, the diver might be brought up by intermittent stages so spaced and timed that he would be properly desaturated at each stage before rising to the lower pressure of the next.

The beauty of Haldane's theory was that by these intermittent rises, a sufficient drop in pressure was realized at each stop so that the gas tended to come out of solution quickly and escape (always of course within safe limits), thus facilitating decompression and shortening it appreciably. But if anyone thinks decompression from deep water is rapid even now, the following excerpts from the United States Navy decompression table is quoted:

Haldane's tables, modified slightly,

Depth in feet	Length of dive, min.	Stops at different depths, in minutes at each depth of water noted below										T'tl time of rise in min.
		100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10 feet	
0—36	No limit	Immediate rise without decompression										2 min.
66	60 min.									3	10 min.	15 min.
	180 min.									10	30 min.	42 min.
250	15 min.		2	3	5	7	10	10	15	20	30 min.	106 min.
	60 min.	10	15	20	25	30	30	35	40	40	40 min.	289 min.

have made deep diving possible and when everything goes well, have practically eliminated the "bends." But everything does not always go well and there are yet other troubles

In spite of decompression tables, heavy pressure effects claim their victims. Men are different, and even the same man reacts to decompression differently on different days. On the *S-51* salvage job, carried out in one hundred and thirty-five feet of cold seawater, minor cases of the "bends" started to incapacitate the divers; and to bolster up the force, some less experienced men were used.

One of these, dazed perhaps when the bottom pressure hit him, started to wander away from the sub. Found by another diver, he was started up. For his length of time on the bottom, he was given more than full decompression. When hauled in over the side and undressed, except for the fact that he was unusually happy with an "oxygen jag" on, he seemed okay. Nevertheless, a few minutes later at the mess table he collapsed.

Promptly his shipmates rushed him up on deck and into the recompression tank where, unconscious, he was put back under the pressure he had faced on the bottom. His abdomen was a mass of blotches from innumerable small burst blood vessels. The doctor worked on him all night as the pressure was released. At 3 A.M., he was still unconscious. Recompression and decompression had done everything possible for him; but paralysis still had him. To save his life, we cut our mooring hawsers and steamed in from sea to land him in a hospital, where for the next few months he hovered between life and death, wasting from a one hundred and sixty pound man down to a seventy pound skeleton before finally after seven months, the turn came and he recovered. Paralyzed intestines was what the "bends" gave him. With less adequate attendance and treatment, he would never have survived the first night. But why didn't his decompression save him from the "bends?" None of us could ever figure that out.

If the "bends," a nitrogen danger, were the only hazard resulting from air pressure, there would be no limit to the depth to which a diver might go, save only his nerve and the capacity of his air compressor to ram the air down to him. But at depths below one hundred and thirty-five feet, (five atmospheres or seventy-five pounds absolute) oxygen itself starts to cause trouble.

Under normal conditions, the air we breathe, with twenty per cent oxygen, has a partial pressure of oxygen (or effective pressure on our lungs) of only one-fifth of an atmosphere. When the diver goes down far enough so the air is compressed to five atmospheres, the partial pressure of the oxygen he breathes is still only one-fifth of that total, but now that one-fifth equals one whole atmosphere, so that the result is the same on his lungs as if he were breathing on the surface one hundred

per cent pure oxygen, undiluted with anything.

Now breathing pure oxygen under pressure greater than normal atmosphere is hazardous, increasingly so as the pressure goes up. The major action on the lungs is to induce pneumonia, slowly if the pressure is only a little above normal, very rapidly (in a few minutes) if it is three or four times normal. And in addition, the oxygen has a narcotic effect, tending to produce unconsciousness, the tendency of course varying with the individual.

In mild excess—say at depths between one hundred and thirty and two hundred feet—the oxygen effect on the diver is exhilarating, intoxicating. Some divers come up decidedly happy, inebriated, suffering from an "oxygen jag" indistinguishable in its effects from an alcoholic one. But at greater depths, two hundred and fifty feet and below, the poisoning effect of the oxygen becomes more and more marked; thinking is difficult, and the diver may verge into unconsciousness without warning.

As a result of this situation, no divers have yet gone appreciably beyond three hundred feet (three hundred and six is the existing record, made twenty years ago.) At this depth, the absolute pressure is ten atmospheres, equal to breathing pure oxygen under twice normal pressure. And for the very best divers, the cream of the diving world physically and mentally, the limiting dive at this depth is fifteen minutes to avoid quick pneumonia, unconsciousness with all its perils at that depth, and naturally the dangers from the "bends." Three hundred feet forms our floor for divers. Beyond that, man can not force his fragile body to stand up under pressure.

SO MUCH for "bends," and the physiological effects inside the body of working at the bottom of the deep sea. But the pressure, in spite of what it may do inside, is not yet through with the diver. It has the outside of his body still in its clutch, and what it does to him there comes under the head of "squeezes."

The usual diving rig, as stated before, consists of a flexible rubber suit, canvas-covered, joined watertight to a rigid copper helmet and breastplate. The suit is flexible to permit the diver to use his body to perform useful work. Once beneath the surface, the sea presses the suit tightly in against the body like a second skin.

The helmet and the breastplate to which it is joined are rigid. It provides the air space in which the diver breathes, the frame to hold the faceplates out of which he looks, the shield for his telephone set. It supports his exhaust valve, acts as a small air reservoir in case his air is shut off momentarily. And it is the balance between the buoyancy of the diver's helmet and the lead weights on his shoes and his belt which maintain his equilibrium and permit him to work in any position, erect or lying down.

But the rigidity of the helmet brings in startling dangers. Ordinarily the erect diver under water so adjusts the spring-loaded exhaust valve in his helmet as to give a little air space in the suit over his chest. This gives the same pressure inside and outside his lungs and makes his breathing relatively easy. From chest up, his head inside the helmet is in air; from his chest down, his body encased in his flexible suit is surrounded by water. To get this result, the pressure of air must equal the weight of water at the chest level, and exceed the pressure at the head level by about half a pound.

Now if the pressure in the helmet is slowly decreased by bleeding air out through the exhaust valve, a strange sensation results. The diver feels himself hugged by the sea, a close embrace on every inch of his skin, literally squeezing his exposed body everywhere. As more air is released, the grip gets

tighter. The initial sensation is not unpleasant—a man indeed may feel that at last he is being caressed by the perfect mistress, lovingly clasped in an all inclusive hug.

But it is well to stop there. What is happening, though as yet only to a slight degree, is that the air pressure is being reduced below what is necessary to balance the sea, and the water is starting to force the blood out of the legs and torso up into the chest cavities, giving an incipient "squeeze."

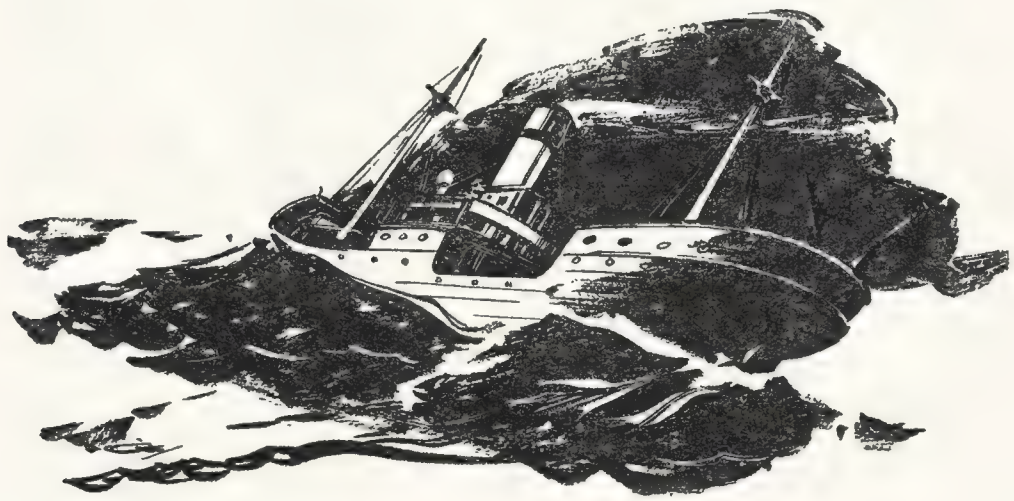
A real "squeeze," involuntary, of course, so far as the diver is concerned, will kill him instantly and horribly. It comes about when for any reason at all, the air pressure in the helmet fails substantially to match the water pressure. When that happens, the sea comes instantly down on the soft body of the diver and molds it, a bloody mass of jelly, into the rigid helmet.

Why?

The lung pressure always matches the pressure inside the helmet. If that falls a little below the water pressure on the body, the sea promptly "squeezes" the blood out of the body into the lungs, causing hemorrhage. If the helmet pressure falls much below the sea pressure, the sea first "squeezes" the flesh itself solidly into the abdominal and chest cavities, and then starts to push the mangled mass up into the low pressure area inside the rigid helmet. Of course, by then the diver is dead, but the relentless sea nevertheless makes a thorough mess of his remains.

Practically, a "squeeze" comes about in various ways, the simplest being for the diver to fall or be dropped some distance under water. A tender ought never to hold the lifelines slack enough to permit this, but he is sometimes careless. As the diver falls, the water pressure suddenly increases on the diver's body, and unless he can as suddenly build up an equal pressure in his helmet, the sea promptly starts to "squeeze" him up into it.

When the *Empress of Ireland* sank some years ago in the St. Lawrence, drowning some one thousand twenty-four immigrants, the owners of the line felt it advisable to hire divers to salvage the bodies of the dead from the hulk. Engaged in this gruesome task, one of the divers working on the forecastle of the wreck, caught by the tide perhaps, was swept overboard, and dropped some forty feet. He was hauled up dead, killed by the "squeeze."



But it doesn't take deep water to make a "squeeze" dangerous; in fact it is far safer to fall a given distance, say thirty feet, when already in deep water, than to fall the same thirty feet close to the surface. In the first case the added pressure of fourteen pounds will only decrease the volume of air in the helmet to about seven-eights of its former volume and if the fall is not too sudden, the air coming in during the fall may build up sufficiently to avoid a "squeeze." But near the surface, an increase in pressure of fourteen pounds will cut the volume of air in the helmet in half; the diver will probably be "squeezed" to death before he can get air enough to compensate for that much.

A broken hose is another source of "squeeze." To prevent this a careful tender will always see that his diver has a check valve on his helmet where the hose attaches, so that regardless of what happens to the hose, the air already in the helmet can't blow out through the ruptured hose. But check valves don't always work and tenders sometimes forget to screw them on the helmet before coupling up the hose. The diver pays.

Ten years ago while I was working on salvaging the submarine *S-51* in deep water out in the Atlantic, a very workaday job was underway in the East River in some thirty feet of water with a couple of divers working from a housed-in scow repairing a bulkhead for a power station. One man was tending both divers.

The noon whistle blew. The tender signalled both divers to come up. One of them did and entered the deckhouse. A few minutes later, the tender, under the impression that both divers were up and inside the scow, proceeded to uncouple the shore ends of their airhoses from the compressed air manifold.

That released the pressure on the second diver who unfortunately had *not* come up. His helmet pressure disappeared, swiftly blowing through the open hose, and the ensuing "squeeze" promptly laid him away dead and badly mangled.

All in all, the diver in deep water has enough to worry about that is real to him. Shark and octopus may be the mainstays for the movie man and the lurid fiction writer when it comes to underwater perils, but for the diver who has to do the job on the ocean floor, it's the everpresent danger of the things he can't see, the "bends" and "squeezes" which make each dive for him a rendezvous with death.

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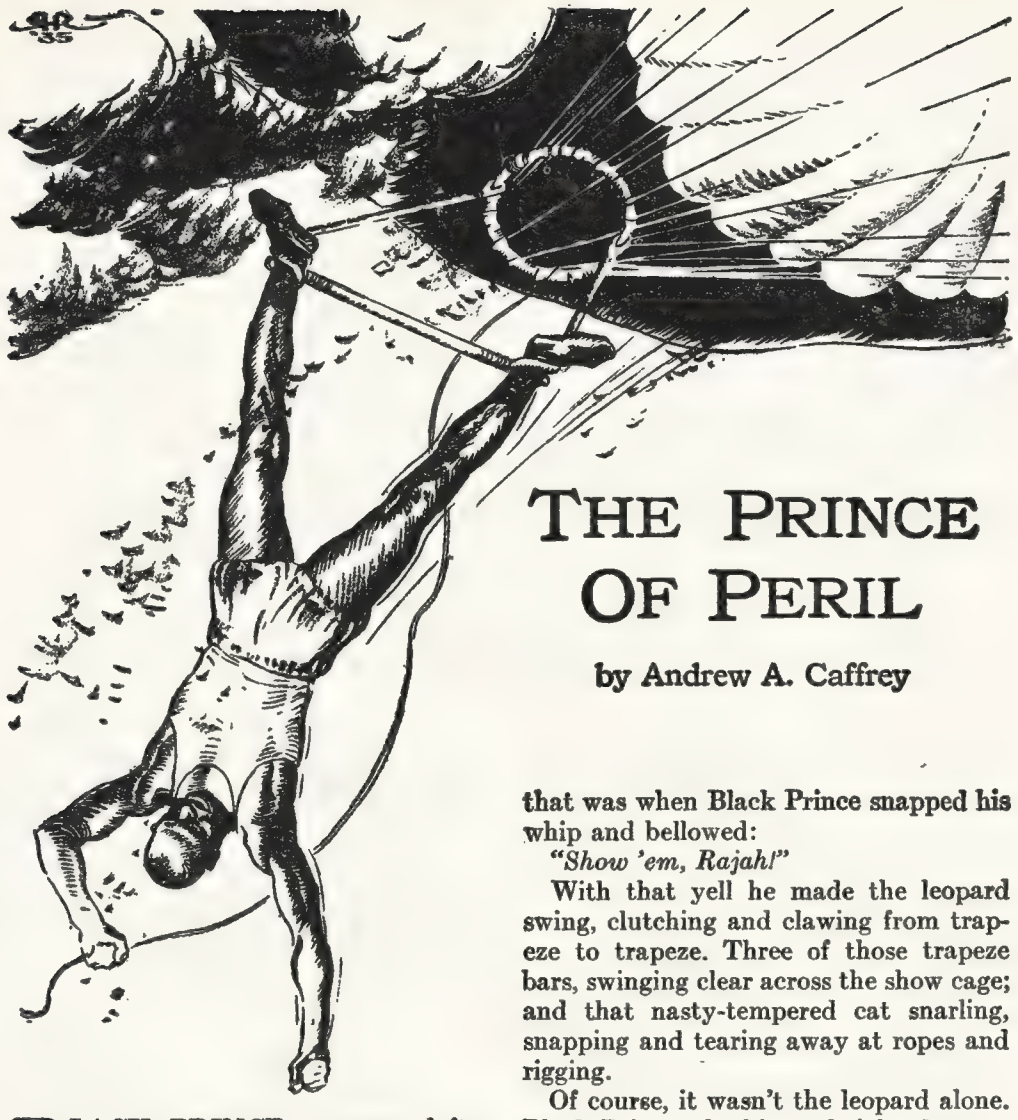


THE PRINCE OF PERIL

by Andrew A. Caffrey

BLACK PRINCE, a great lofty, catlike buck, came to Glen Forest for the summer season. With Black Prince, on the other end of a tight leash, was a tawny leopard. This was to be the animal act during Glen Forest's summer run. It was back at the turn of the century, and Glen Forest was the amusement park out at the up-river end of the trolley track.

Black Prince stopped the show that summer. He put on all the usual stuff—jumping, posing, bounding through hoops. But the thing that brought the pressing throngs right up close—boy!—that was when Black Prince snapped his whip and bellowed:

"Show 'em, Rajah!"

With that yell he made the leopard swing, clutching and clawing from trapeze to trapeze. Three of those trapeze bars, swinging clear across the show cage; and that nasty-tempered cat snarling, snapping and tearing away at ropes and rigging.

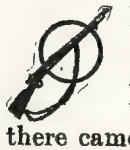
Of course, it wasn't the leopard alone. Black Prince, the big, red-tighted tower of jet, was all showman. You couldn't picture him without those red tights. He was wearing them when the old ballyhoo brought him down the Pullman steps—with the cat on leash—when that up-from-Boston Express dropped him. And the *Tribune* and *Telegram* each had cameramen on hand, and all the Merrimac Valley read about it that night. And, days after that, they even came down from Lowell and up from Haverhill to see the big act. The big act and the big black, both.

Perhaps the only other outstanding

member of the Black Prince's race then in town was Nigger Hobbity, the shine down at the Essex House. Naturally Black Prince and Nigger Hobbity became close pals. That was a little bit of heaven for the local black boy—think of it!—being seen palling with the great Black Prince! Why, that made Nigger Hobbity aces with the dusky girls down at the lower end of town. During time off, the cat man and the shoe man spent much time down that way, which was to be expected.

Nigger Hobbity had always entertained social ambitions—at least down in the lower end. He was chesty and glistening. He was a pushover for all those doll-'em-up remedies, the anti-kink lotions, etc. He had the idea that, with a little subterfuge, plus a few bottles of this and that sweet-smelling foo-foo water, he could cause himself to look more than ever attractive to those elegant ebon ladies of the lower end. All of which might seem to have nothing much to do with a leopard in his high-walled show cage at Glen Forest, but it had.

Black Prince and his act went big every afternoon and night of that hot July; and it was hot. The mobs came down from Lowell and up from Haverhill, hanging to the straps and running-boards of the open trolleys. It was Glen Forest's biggest show season. The papers said so. The *Tribune* and the *Telegram* even ran stories about Black Prince. Stories that were news, and not paid for by the park's press agent. Black Prince began to spend more and more time on Essex Street, all the time with Nigger Hobbity doing a prominent and joyous bask in the borrowed sunlight of the big cat-trainer's popularity.



FRONT-PAGE luck such as that was too good to last. And it didn't. Before the first week of August had passed there came a night's show that dropped an egg. Rajah went sour on Black Prince. He wouldn't do this or that or anything. The performance was a complete bust; and the park management had to apologize. The following afternoon no attempt was made to show; and the newspapers that evening made mention of the fact. The Glen Forest ads, during the next few days, made this excuse and that—Rajah was sick. Black Prince was rehearsing a new act.

But the kids who peeked under the canvas sides of the big show cage knew that Black Prince was doing his dangdest, by the long hour, to make that ugly leopard perform. Those kids could tell you that Rajah was ugly, no fooling. Black Prince was working, they said, with two riflemen in the cage with him. He was working with whip and chair, too. But to no avail. He and Rajah seemed perfect strangers, or perfectly bad enemies. The big cat would pose and snarl. He'd even go through the hoop, were Black Prince to offer enough prod and urge with whip and chair.

But Rajah wouldn't follow-up on the swinging trapeze act; and without that piece of business, it was just another act. The kids reported that the big cat would always take the first trapeze, because he had to. You see, he took that first swinging bar from a set pose atop his high stand—and Black Prince always threw the heavy swinging trapeze right at the cat, yelling—"Yo! Rajah!" Truth was, Rajah really reached for the bar in self-defense. Defense instinct.

Rajah still took that first bar. He took it snarling and pawing, tangled as usual in the side ropes and rings, swung off the high stand—then flopped to the ground and made a snarling run for the exit chute.

There must have been a whole lot of drama there behind that canvas wall—behind that canvas where a black man and a wild beast fought, hour by hour and day after day, to see who'd be mas-

ter and who the slave. The drama became brutal. Black Prince, seeing his mastery passing and his glory in jeopardy, must have lost his head and turned whipping-boy in earnest. Even those who didn't peek under and through the canvas could hear the snap and cut of whip, and the snarl, growl and cry of that great cat. There was abuse there, and no question about it. No question about it at all when the S.P.C.A. got wind of the matter and brought pressure on the park management.

That same evening, in both local papers, the good offices of the watchful S.P.C.A. were lauded, the quick cooperation of the park authorities was also mentioned, and the actions of Black Prince were roundly panned. So that, for the time being, was the end of the ebon giant in red tights. A new man—sort of a colorless German—came within a few days to handle Rajah. But he was just one more white, a man in boots, and no red tights. And the act reverted to just another act.

The once-lavish newspapers didn't even mention that Black Prince had quit town. Nigger Hobbity gave an explanation to a few of the bar-flies at the free-lunch counter of the Essex House.

He said: "That Black Prince boy got too uppity. Didn't you-all see how he done had the kink took outa his wool?" Just as though his own wool wasn't stringy and kinkless at the time of speaking. "An' that ain't all. Uh-huh! He done use bottle after bottle of Doctah Mellenow's Hair Glossifier. An' that there was what happned to that Black Prince boy—he got all that elegant perfume into that hide of him. Tha's bad. Ah knows. Cats go by smell; and when Rajah can't smell that Black Prince boy. Rajah don' guess that he have to preform; and he don' . . . Yas, suh; that fool Nigger Black Prince wen' sissy on hisself."

BLACK PRINCE next showed up here and there at other New England resorts, in the even more spectacular role of parachute jumper. That is: jumping from the free, hot-air balloons.

Kids came back from beaches all along the North Shore, telling that they had seen Black Prince, red tights and all, make his jump. And what a jump! They said that Black Prince took it on the run, took it on the jump. That is to say, Black Prince allowed his balloon to start up, getting the dangling trapeze a good running jump free of the ground before he, the Black Prince, would make his dash, spring and grab.

Then, as he put hands on that upsweeping bar, he'd swing a full cartwheel over, drop to a sit, just for a split second, then take hands off the ropes, fall back, hang just for a shake by the knees, slide down to an ankle hold; and then, as the big bag swept through two-three-four thousand feet of climb, Black Prince would hang and swing by his toes. Not by the ankles—by his toes—the Prince of Peril! Through thousands of feet.

That was awful! Women screamed and fainted. That was balloon-jumping, back at the turn of the century. But now it's gone; and it'll never come back. Never come back the way Black Prince did it.

Black Prince came back to Glen Forest. Hardly a full month had passed since his ignominious departure from that park.

As a rule, Labor Day ended the season at such amusement parks. But owing to the prolonged heat, the railroad company decided to carry on, with all attractions running, till the middle of September. And The Great Black Prince and his balloon monopolized every trolley billboard in the Merrimac Valley. The first Saturday following Labor Day was to be his opening date.

Glen Forest derived its name from

its location: a small, riverside glen in a forest of high pines. The glen, stretching briefly from the row of animal cages to the long pavilion on the river's high bank, offered only a few acres' open space. It was in this open space, not more than a hundred feet in front of Rajah's show cage, that the two tall masts had been erected—the two tall masts flanking the fire pit over which Black Prince's balloon would be inflated. And it was into those few clear acres that several thousand valley people had crowded by two-thirty on that first Saturday after Labor Day.

At two-thirty sharp the fire-eating roustabouts began tossing kerosene through the fire pit. The long tongues of flame shot up into the slack bag. Important silk-men did this and that; Professor Baldwin—in charge of the balloon—barked orders; and inflation was under way. As yet, no Black Prince had appeared. He wouldn't. Not till the last minute. Then he'd make a grand entry. That was scheduled for three o'clock, the time set for the ascension.

But the fates that worked the destinies of balloonists and parachute-jumpers had other plans that day. Before the bag had swelled fully fat between its high masts, a spark set fire to its interior fabric. The sparkers inside were too slow with the water. The flames came right through the fabric, burning a yard-wide hole. The tantrum of Professor Baldwin was horrible, but, at any rate, that big bag had to be pulled from the masts. Another balloon must be shaken out and hoisted into place.

The park's manager climbed atop a kerosene drum and begged the throng to be patient. It would take less than an hour, he said. Meantime, just to help pass the time away, Professor Muller would do his act with Rajah. Rajah the leopard. There in that big, safe, high-walled wire cage! Rajah, the man-killer!

And through it all, Black Prince had never showed his face, form or red tights. Boy! was he a showman! Fate or fire couldn't ruffle that big performer.

It took quite some time to locate Professor Muller, he who had replaced Black Prince. Insofar as the leopard act's scheduled time was three-fifteen, following that set for the balloon ascension, the new trainer was hard to find. And a full half hour has passed before boots and whip came tramping through the crowd. The German was mumbling snappy gutturals, for no true artist likes to act as a fill-in on call. By then the new balloon had been shaken out, rigged and hoisted, limply, between the high masts. Another few minutes and the fire-eaters were again tossing kerosene, and the second inflation was well under way. Balloon inflation was always spectacular.

Professor Muller and his big cat didn't get much attention after that. The park manager had told the trainer to get in there and go through the motions; and that's about all the whip-snapping German in boots was doing. Rajah didn't seem to care. His part, simple to the extreme, could have been performed by any good house cat. A few spectators pressed close and gazed through the wide-mesh, heavy wire fence. Three o'clock had passed; and soon three-fifteen was on the dial. The tightening silk was in full swell then; and the fire-eating, sponge-swiping sparkers within the great envelope could be seen—with each roaring flare of kerosene—working frantically, always on the alert, for fear this second balloon might take fire and spoil the day entirely. So by three-thirty the balloon was all but ready; just a few minutes more and she'd be set to go.

A long runner of canvas was whipped out on the grass. It was all of fifty or sixty feet in length. It led from the base of the balloon back toward the show cage, where Black Prince had known his first Glen Forest glory—the cage wherein Professor Muller and Rajah now loafed, for no eyes were on them. Pro-

fessor Baldwin, still cussing, chased the kids and other spectators away from the canvas runner, away even from the end that was nearest Rajah's cage. So Professor Muller, prodding Rajah to a pose atop his high stand, found a seat for himself not far from the big cat, atop one of the starred tubs. Professor Muller had a grandstand seat. Rajah just moped, his back to the balloon and his small eyes on Professor Muller—if on anything at all. Perhaps Rajah slept and dreamed, dreamed of more glorious days —and red tights on a black master.

Professor Baldwin next attached the parachute to the balloon, giving his close attention to the cut-away knife and its jerk-rope. Then he straightened out the parachute, along that canvas runner, with the long shroud-lines and the trapeze bringing up the end of the lay-out, away down near Rajah's cage. Parachute, shroud-lines and the trapeze, all in a line, gave you a runner-covered stretch of fully forty or forty-five feet. Boy! when Black Prince swung off at the end of that streamer of silk and cords, you'd see some swing!

And now it was time for Black Prince!

THE park musicians watching from the high bandstand tooted a fanfare. The milling crowd on the outer edge of the circling mob opened a pathway for the mighty man in red. Boys cheered and oldsters applauded. There was acclaim there!

Black Prince, aflood with the good nature and sunshine of a race that grins and laughs, came slowly through his crowd. He stepped over the balloon-circling guard-rope and walked, still waving, once round the great, slowly-swaying globe. He stopped to inspect the cut-away knife. He stooped then and followed the jerk-rope down to the trapeze. Good aircraftsmanship. Good showmanship. He next spent a few minutes of time doing this and that to his trapeze bar—cleaning it, inspecting rings and ropes. That trapeze and its ropes would dangle Black Prince between life and death, through thousands of feet. It had to be right. Satisfied that it was right, Black Prince gently placed his trapeze back on the canvas runner. Placed it with the care you'd place flowers on the grave of a loved one.

Black Prince, with that great ivory grin, stood erect then. His eyes went down along the runner of shroud-lines and parachute silk, then up to the balloon itself. Still studying his take-off strip, Black Prince fell back, foot by foot, toward the show cage. Boys on hands and knees crowded in from either side. Now and then the big black playfully reached down and tossed one or more of those kids away from his back-stepping feet. The crowd just laughed. Kids were Black Prince's dish. He loved them, and they him.

Professor Baldwin, touchy with the business of getting that balloon away in good style, strode up one side of the runner and down the other, tossing boys back as he went. The crowd booed, and Black Prince yaw-yawed laughingly:

"Sh' man! Bear down light with that air whip!"

Professor Baldwin was back at the balloon. He snapped out an order and the roustabout with the kerosene stopped firing the pit. The crown-ropes to the high masts were cast off. The hold-down men were freeing the neck skirts and putting their own weight against the bag's lift. The balloon was ready.

Professor Baldwin raised a hand and the park band began a muted roll on the drums.

"Are you ready, Black Prince?" Baldwin bellowed.

A few thousand hearts stopped beating; and except for the soft, ever-increasing roll on the drums, Glen Forest was very silent.

"Are you ready, Black Prince?" Baldwin repeated.

Showmanship called for a slight suspense. Stunt stuff must never be approached slap-bang. That would destroy the element of uncertainty, the anxiety and expectation. Caution in the face of this great danger, pause, suspense—that's what to give them. Black Prince was the boy to furnish the whole routine. So he raised a hand as a sign that he had heard Professor Baldwin and was now considering. He was considering his windage and the direction of that wind. He looked beyond the balloon and studied the row of flags atop the riverside pavilion. Then to check against the flags, Black Prince wet a finger and held it aloft. But that was hardly enough, for a man could not be too sure; so he reached down, selected just the right amount and grade of loose dirt, then tossed that into the air. And by then Black Prince had some idea of the wind's likely direction.

Next, from where he stood, some three or four yards from his trapeze, Black Prince paced to the trapeze—as a jumper or pole-vaulter measures his run distance to the take-off line. Black Prince found that he had been standing too close to his trapeze; for you'll recall that his style was to allow the rising equipment a head-start on him. You'll remember that Black Prince ran after the rising trapeze, made his mighty jump for it, and landed performing. So the distance wasn't just right. This was going to be a show. He'd go back and back; and when he started forward, you'd see a dash that was a dash. Leave that to Black Prince. Black Prince, who was really staging a come-back in the eyes of Glen Forest.

Meanwhile, in spite of the fact that he knew the importance of this delay, Professor Baldwin waxed impatient. His signal hand was still aloft as he surveyed the balloon crew and bit off snappy orders—"On your toes, you men! . . . An' keep your eye on my hand! . . . Hey, you—don't foul that line! . . . Hi, stupid—don't wrap yourself round that line—want to take a ride, eh? . . . *Are you ready,* Black Prince? . . . *Are you ready?*"

Again the boys on hands and knees had crowded in toward the canvas runner and Black Prince's pacing feet. And now Black Prince had swung, with his back to the balloon, and started stepping off the exact to-the-trapeze distance for his final, spectacular dash and jump. Then, as he reached the last step of that measuring, Black Prince brought both feet together and stood very erect, all set to whirl on heels and face Professor Baldwin and that up-raised signal hand. Standing so, facing the leopard's show cage at close range, Black Prince noticed his old friend Rajah for the first time. A great toothsome grin spread itself across Black Prince's face from ear to ear. He'd clown a bit:

"Hello, Rajah, ol' boy!" he called. *"Ho! Rajah!"*

Rajah came to his feet atop his high stand, and he came up and around snarling. *There* was that great voice again—*"Ho! Rajah!"* It was the voice he associated with ill treatment, with whip and chair, and, perhaps, even worse. . . . And there were those red tights!

Rajah came off that high stand, clear to the top of the cage fence, in an arched leap that suggested wings. His great pads bunched, just for a split second, on the pipe stringer which was the fence's top. His next leap sent him through the air toward those red tights, toward that whipping-boy, down among all those kids. Panic and that great cat broke loose together at Glen Forest. In shorter time than it takes to tell it, the packed park was a bedlam. Stark madness *en masse.*

A balloon ready to go! A mad leopard loose!

That cat, rushing, would have time and attention for others only after Black

Prince had been dealt with—and Black Prince knew it. With that cat in mid-air, the giant black took a few steps—not rushes or runs—along the open space wherein he found himself on the spot. And with those steps, Black Prince bellowed—"Ready, Professor! Turn 'er loose!" Ah, he'd get away, safely; but what of the others, the kids?

Professor Baldwin's hand fell. It's very likely that the hold-down men hadn't even waited for the signal. They, like all others, had seen Rajah. So the balloon was free and rising. And the trapeze going.

"*Ho! Rajah!*" Black Prince then bellowed.

That voice! That voice of command! "*Ho! Rajah!*" And Black Prince had put a hand on the trapeze just as it was rising free of the ground. "*Ho! Rajah! . . . Take it!*" and Black Prince had thrown that trapeze to the charging cat.

Rajah, in that crowded, mad second, reverted. He reverted to the command-taking cat that, only a month ago, had taken that same order at least twice a day. Rajah, in his final leap, took the trapeze. Took it because that black man in red tights had told him to take it.

"Hold it, Rajah! Hold it!" Black Prince yelled above the din of the mad mob. Scratching and clawing, then gazing down wildly at the departing earth, Rajah held to that trapeze. Cat instinct told him that the fall was then too great; for the balloon and its queer cargo was sailing high over the pavilion, then over the Merrimac. Panic had subsided, giving way for a sort of pity, pity for that helpless, great cat. An air-going, wild-eyed cat that was destined to ride the sky for nearly half an hour, then be dragged through the tree-tops of the pine grove opposite Bean Island, some five miles west of Glen Forest. And sunset was to find Rajah recaptured and on his way back to the show cage, in the mumbling company of Professor Muller.

But in that minute of panic release, that minute of danger's passing, Black Prince stood there where had been a balloon, threw back his slick, shiny dome and laughed. Laughed long and loud, as only the laughing men of his race can laugh, and yaw-yawed as the thrill ran through his showman's soul.

"Rajah! Ol' Rajah boy. He know who boss-man. . . . He sho' don't steal ma show . . . dat de bes' show for Black Prince yet!"

SHARK!

By Captain Jean M. Ellrich

KINABAGBAGAN Reef, the treacherous, the graveyard of hundreds of Chinese pirate junks and other ships, was asleep underneath the calm water blanket spread by the tropical night.

Soon the morning winds would raise whitecaps, small waves, and tiny warning breakers. But now the reef was hidden from view.

A small outrigger *banca,* manned by two brown men, glided speedily across the dark waters towards this reef. One of the men stopped paddling, bent his head down inside of the dugout, and listened.

"*Maàlim, barras!* Deep water, sand bottom!" he said as he took to paddling again. A few yards farther he repeated the process. "Shallow water, but still sand bottom!"

On they paddled for a few more minutes, while the day was breaking over the mountains of Zambales. The next time they stopped, they were over coral. Ansong, the bow paddler, took a pair of wooden-framed spectacles from the floor of the *banca,* and after washing them carefully in tobacco-juice from his mouth, mixed with sea-water, placed them over his eyes. Then he took a seven-foot steel arrow and inserted it into the barrel opening of a wooden gun. Stretching a seven-fold rubber band, cut from an old inner tube, and on one end secured to the forward end of the barrel, he hooked the free end into a notch in the arrow, and set the trigger.

After a look around for the triangular dorsal fin of a selachian he jumped overboard, with the gun in his right hand.

Head bent down, so that he could see the floor of the ocean, he swam around for a few moments on the surface of the

South China Sea, and then he dived. Reappearing a few minutes later he called:

"Padji! Help me lift up our breakfast!"

Padjuri paddled over to where Ansong was swimming, retrieved the latter's gun, which was floating butt up, and declared:

"It is said to be bad luck to feast before you labor!"

"Yes, my cousin, so it is said; but it is not so written. Besides, we worked in coming out here these three miles."

Padjuri did not raise any further objection, but laid his paddle aside and went overboard. And together they dived; one fathom, two fathoms, three, four, five fathoms. Up they came, kicking with their feet, and carrying their breakfast between them.

A *táclobo*, a giant shell; it weighed over fifty pounds. They lifted it into their dugout, and came out of the water themselves. While Padjuri was holding the large mollusk to the floor, Ansong withdrew the arrow, with which he had shot it, and which was now gripped in tightly between the vise-like shells.

But the large bivalve was far from being dead. Waiting for a few seconds until it had opened its inch thick walls again, Ansong inserted the point of his *bolo* into the crevice. Killing the animal, cutting its flesh loose from the sides, and prying apart the halves, was the labor of almost twenty minutes. One had to be careful. The *táclobos* are powerful denizens of the deep, with flint hard walls pulled and held together by a mass of muscles as large as a water melon. To get one's finger caught between the two shells meant its loss.

They threw the empty shells overboard, and each one took one-half of the glistening black meat, cut it into long thin strips, and sat down on his end of the *banca* to chew and eat breakfast.

Some splishes and splashes stirred the calm surface. Several fishes jumped out of the water, and, after skipping along the surface for a few feet, dived in again.

"*Pating!* Padjuri! Come on, there is sharkfish for us to kill!" Ansong dropped his food, pulled down his glasses, and with the *bolo* in his hand jumped overboard, followed by Padjuri with a loaded gun.

With the weapons in their right hands they dived, and swimming close together, approached the shark from underneath. Padjuri aimed his gun and pressed the trigger, and his arrow went into the shark's eye, protruding again from the other.

Simultaneously Ansong came up underneath the shark and pushed his *bolo* into the shark's belly. The pain of the arrow passing through his oculary nerves caused the shark to lunge forward, thus ripping his belly open on the sharp knife, held solidly in Ansong's hands.

Padjuri made a quick dive underneath the shark, and withdrew the arrow from his left eye. Then both men came to the surface quickly, swam to their *banca*, which had drifted off a little ways, and jumped aboard. The dead shark was slowly sinking to the bottom, its blood coloring the waters carmine.

They had not long to wait for other sharks, attracted by the odor of blood. Voracious, ever hungry, cannibalistic, they came from all directions to feed on their dead relative.

The surface of the water above the reef now churned and boiled. Dozens of sharks of all sizes and species were fighting with one another for a piece of the carcass.

One would dive in and start to swallow a part of the still floating intestine. Before he could get it a quarter ways down, another shark would snatch at the other end. A third one swooped at the middle, and before he could bite in, a fourth shark appeared and took it.

Seeing his food snatched away afront of his eyes, the third shark made a dive and turn, biting the fourth one just

forward of the ventral fins, riving him clear open.

Down he went, bowels falling out, yet making a few vain attempts to snap at his opponent. More sharks appeared, each one taking a bite of his descending body, until nothing but the head came to rest on the sandy bottom between the coral rocks, to be eaten by water snakes and shell fish. While above another shark had been wounded in the scrimmage. More blood. More food for the selachian brotherhood. And the rising sun illuminated a boiling spotch of brilliant red on an otherwise calm and green ocean.

The two young Moros waited in their *banca* for the fight to subside.

THE *Hipon Maru* had left her homeport in Formosa three days ago, and was illegally in the Philippine waters, supplied with provisions for a two months' stay at sea.

Provisions in this instance meant only fuel and lube oil for her engines. Everything else would be obtained while under way. Kaiiji Teramota, her owner and captain, knew when and where to get the additional victuals with less bother and less expense than at home. He was more than just a little proud of this knowledge.

He was proud of many things. Of his ancestors, a long line of fishermen and pirates. Of being a subject of the strongest nation in the Orient; a nation which was always ready to coöperate with and protect its citizens. Of his exploits in all waters within a thousand miles from his home, even though most of these adventures had been performed in violation of some laws. But he was especially proud of his new fishing vessel.

She had cost him much money; this new *Hipon Maru*. His old vessel had been to small, too slow. He almost got caught with it last year, when he had been stealing hardwood lumber from the Fuga Islands. So this one, of forty tons net, was equipped with an eighty horsepower diesel engine and with a radio receiver.

The radio was an invaluable aid to him in his business of fishing in distant waters. It kept him informed of all ordinary news and weather reports, and, as a member of the "Formosa Deepsea Fishermen's Association," he also knew when and where to dial in for certain special reports.

Kiroshita, the boatswain, was at the wheel. On sighting the *banca* a few points off their port bow, he brought it to the attention of Teramota, who was squatting with his men at breakfast, abaft the cabin.

Kaiiji arose and stepped on top of the cabin to have a better view.

"Ho, looks like there are some early fishermen, who may be able to tell us how fishing is in these waters this month. Steer her in, and let's find out what these *children of the next nation* are doing!"

Their powerful engine quickly covered the few miles. Kiroshita brought the *Hipon Maru* to a stop close to the *banca*.

The two Moros in the dugout were paddling over for a closer examination of the *Hipon Maru*. Teramota spoke in Tagalog, the most used dialect in the islands:

"We are from Manila, and have been up North, but found few fishes up there only. Are there any fish here?"

Ansong, as the elder of the two, replied: "Yes, in some places there are many."

"Why are there so many sharks here around your *banca?* Did one of your companions get hurt?"

"No. We are catching fish."

"But the sharks?"

"Oh, we feed them first. When their bellies are full we can catch and kill them; then they won't eat us, when we dive for our fish."

"Is this your home province?"

Ansong never could explain what

prompted him to reply "Yes." Ansong Tillah and Padjuri Usman were Moros from the Island of Jolo. Not the ordinary kind of Moros one reads about in the papers—the kind dressed in tight and brightly colored pants, decorated with brass bells and gold brocade, and armed with razor-sharp *barongs,* delight in killing off people. But they were a couple of versatile young chaps, who had been around plenty in their eighteen and twenty years.

There was hardly a port, anchorage, bay, or river in the Philippines or the immediately surrounding islands, which they did not know. There was hardly a native dialect which they did not at least understand. And hardly a job which they could not do.

That is, if they wanted to. But they really wanted to do only one thing, besides eating and sleeping. That was fishing—which, of course, included the paddling of their *banca,* and swimming and diving. They were possessed of one weakness, which occasionally cropped out. *Bailarinas;* dancing girls.

On account of this weakness they had stayed behind here in Zambales, some months ago, when their family *vinta,* manned by a crew of eight, had anchored off the *barrio* of Panibuatan.

But now their cash was spent, and their feet were itchy for other and much warmer parts of the islands. For Sulu, for Zamboango, or for Palawan; for any place where they would again be near people of their own tribe and religion.

To get there, however, they would have to have money, with which to buy either a large and suitable *banca* or a bus-ticket to Manila, where they could get steamer-connection down south.

And the most pleasant way for them to get money was to go fishing. Not with a hook and line, nor with a small throw-net, like the natives of this province. That was too slow and uncertain; one had to wait for the fish. Far better to go after the fish, Moro-style, with a gun and arrow, and shoot them.

"Then you know the best fishing places around here?" Teramota continued.

"Why not!"

"Would you show us some, so we can bring some fish home to our wives and children?"

"Today? We have little time only. We have to catch fish for our own selves, for our food and our living," Ansong retorted, thinking ruefully of the many hundreds of pesos they had foolishly spent on fat dancing girls.

"Yes, today. Now! We have large nets and can catch more fish at one time than you can catch all day. You show us where the fish are and we will throw out our nets. Three throws for us, and one throw for you."

Ansong and Padjuri had on several occasions before seen Japanese fishermen use their large nets, and watched how they had pulled them in again, spillingly loaded with fish.

"Will most likely get two *bancas* full, judging from the size of the Haponese boat," Ansong remarked to his cousin in Sulu dialect. "What do you think—is this your way, too?"

"That is my way, too," Padjuri replied.

Ansong turned and looked at Teramota, and enunciated the words slowly: "All right! Three for you, and one for us. What shall we do with our *banca?*"

"Come aboard; we can tow it astern."

Relieving Kiroshita at the wheel, Teramota commanded him to get the nets and boats clear for lowering; and under Ansong's expert pilotage he steered the *Hipon Maru* through channels between submerged reefs and rocks, which were not easily visible in the calm and yet dark waters of the early morning.

Arriving on one of the fishing banks pointed out by Ansong, the vessel was slowed down. Over each side a flat-bottomed boat, shaped somewhat like a dory, was lowered away, manned by

seven men. A large trawl-net was lying over the stern; the trot-lines were held by the coxswains of the dories.

A third boat, on the type of a cockle-shell, was still aboard, and ordinarily would have been lowered too. However, Teramota had asked the Moros' permission to use their *banca* instead, had placed four men with paddles in it.

Padjuri, who was standing with Ansong and Teramota on top of the cabin, was the first to notice the school of small fishes, about a third of a mile off, on their port quarter.

As if not to scare them off, he whispered: *"Isda! Ayón!* Fish! There!" and pointed out the direction.

The two dories went out fan-like from the motherboat, dragging the net down from the low sternsheets, and trolling it astern.

The *banca*-men dipped their paddles, and with long strokes shot away from the *Maru* with the speed of a barracuda. They circled around the trawl and over towards the far side of the school of fishes. Here they turned the *banca* around quickly, and paddled into the direction of the center of the net, now coming their way.

As they paddled on they would, with the finish of each stroke, knock the edge of their paddles sharply against the side of the dugout; thus making a dull click from which the fishes would try to flee.

And into the trap they would run. In between the two dories, along the sides of the net, and into the opening of the end-pocket.

The dory-coxswains watched carefully. As soon as their boats lost headway from the heavy load, they pulled on the spilling lines, closing the opening of the purse. Then they took in the net, hand over hand, until the pocket, now alive and shining with thousands of fishes, was hanging in the water between the two boats.

A boom swung out, the *Hipon Maru* came over, and the men on her deck threw down into the dories some large basket-shaped nets attached to heavy rattan rings, with rope-grommets spliced around the latter at certain intervals.

The spilling line was loosened, the pocket mouth was widened out, and the baskets were dipped in, two at a time, and filled with fish.

Basket full after basket full; load after load; until the pocket had been emptied. Thirty-five large baskets full, all told, of *dalagang bukids*, ladies of the mountains, worth five cents apiece on any market.

FOR hours they cruised off the coast; on and between the reefs, dropping their nets in places designated by Ansong and Padjuri.

Sometimes they would get few fishes only; a basket full, or two, or three; often they hauled in ten baskets and more. And now their holds were filled to the top with *dalagang bukids*, mackerels, bass, *bonitos*, butter fish, tunnies, snappers, hardtails, leather-jacks and amber-jacks; with small octopi, squids, crabs, lobsters, shrimps and other table delicacies.

Padjuri and Ansong were elated. One-fourth of this wealth was theirs. Had they fished according to their own old methods, it would have taken them a month.

"Why," Padjuri declared enthusiastically, "this will bring us enough money in the markets of the nearest four towns and villages, to go home immediately via Manila!"

"Manila!" Ansong repeated, "Why, this boat belongs there, and is going back there right now. So the captain told us this morning. Why could we not go back with him, and take our cash at Manila. Fish are dearer there, too; we will get more money yet."

"That is my way, too. We have nothing on the shore here, except our blanket. We could leave that behind, and thus save much time. Let us ask him."

And Teramota, who had neither expected so rich a catch, nor had ever intended to keep his end of the bargain, had replied:

"Certainly, why not? We will be coming back this way in a week or so, and can drop you off again, then."

Ansong said to his cousin, in Tagalog:

"See, brother, it is good luck, and not bad luck, to feast before you labor; especially on a *taclobo*."

Teramota caught at the word.

"I have a friend in Manila who has a hobby of collecting shells. He has asked me on several occasions to bring him some of these giant shells; but we have never picked up any with the net. So, if you will dive down, and bring up one or two large ones, I will pay you well.

"*Media peso* apiece," Ansong retorted, "is the customary price for them in this district."

"That is worth it," Teramota said. "Wait a second!" He went into his cabin. Reappearing a minute later, he handed Ansong a silver peso, and said: "Bring up two of them."

Ansong glanced at the coin, assented with his head, and knotted the coin into the corner of his undershirt.

"We will have to go out to the west side of that reef over there," Ansong informed Teramota, "This water here is too shallow for large shells."

After the boats and their *banca* were hoisted aboard, Ansong piloted the *Hipon Maru* over to the designated area. There he washed and adjusted his diving glasses and went overboard, armed with his long steel spear.

Taclobos are fairly plentiful in those waters, but giant *taclobos* are not often found. It took him almost an hour's swimming around before he located one. There it was lying on the bottom of the China Sea, ten fathoms down. It was hardly visible in that depth, even though the sun was directly overhead. But he could just make out the white circle from its pearly white shell edges around the black meat. It was lying there, wide open, and waiting for food to come.

Taking a deep breath, he dived for it.

Straight down he went. Two fathoms, four fathoms, six fathoms; the work was getting harder. He was hungry, a little thirsty, somewhat tired.

Eight fathoms. The water was pressing in on his body from all sides, and was penetrating into his middle ears.

Nine fathoms down, now. Gripping the spear tightly, lest his hands slip and get caught between the powerful valves, he approached the shell, pushed the spear into its center, and with a twist of his wrist pulled it out again.

The shell started to close its walls.

This surely was a giant; the meat alone would weigh six pounds, Ansong calculated, and the whole shell around a hundred and fifty pounds. It was the largest one he had seen in this province. He should have made the price after bringing it up, as this one was worth three or four pesos alone.

In went the spear again. He would have to kill it, quickly too. It was too large to be handled alive, or just merely wounded. There was too much danger of the hand slipping and getting caught. He twisted the spear and pulled it out—and pushed it in again.

Small slimy bubbles arose from the shell, but Ansong withdrew the spear before the shell could close down on it.

Now his breath was running short and he had to come up. Back at the surface, he had to breathe deeply for a few times, before he could call over to the vessel:

"Padjuri! It is big! Drop a line over, and come help me lift it!"

Padjuri washed and adjusted his diving glasses, jumped overboard, and was swimming towards Ansong, who was treading water above the place of the shell, which was now invisible to them, because she had closed up her house.

Teramota was still standing at the rail, and with a sinister expression in his lower

eyelids, watched them until they had dived enough to be out of his sight. Then, leaning his body up against the corner of his cabin, he commanded: " 'Shita! Course West! Setsu! Full speed ahead!"

CAPTAIN JAMES E. McBANE, formerly of the Department of Investigations of the U. S. Bureau of Navigation, and for the past ten years owner of the auxiliary schooner *Bituin*, engaged in the exploitation of all that swims and creeps in between and around the islands, and also Assistant Insular Game Warden, stopped his car on the end of the side road leading to the beach of Rosario.

He and Lieutenant Garcia of the Constabulary got out of the car, and McBane pointed with his left hand, and said:

"Over there between these two reefs, the army dropped some bombs during maneuvers last spring. Some of them didn't explode, and the natives from this district are diving for the duds, to recover the dynamite. We have checked all busses and cars coming into this province; there are no explosives now being smuggled in that way. Still and all, fish are being killed around here with dynamite. So I'd suggest that you place some spotter along the beach here and watch for the divers. Especially watch that place over there, which is now in line with those coconuts and . . . Say! That looks like there is somebody swimming out there, all by himself! See it? About a mile and a half out. There is not enough waterspray for it to be a school of fishes, and too much for it to be a turtle. And I don't see a *banca* around."

Garcia looked. "By golly, yes! But people don't go that far out without a *banca*. Must be something else; maybe it is a whale or a shark."

"No!" retorted McBane, "It is a lone swimmer, and he seems to be mighty tired, too."

As is usual when an American or European appears at an out-of-the-way place in the Orient, a crowd of male natives of all ages had collected around McBane and Garcia. Some of these were quickly commandeered, a dugout was pushed into the water and manned by five bystanders, besides McBane and Garcia.

When they reached the man in the water, they dragged him into the *banca*, where he exhaustedly sat down on the floor. Garcia asked him in English what had happened.

It was Ansong. Very slowly he told how he and Padjuri had gone out that morning to fish, and how they had met up with the Japanese, who later on steamed off with their *banca* aboard, while they were in the water bringing up the shell.

They had dropped the mollusk and started to do the only thing possible: swim back the five miles to the beach. But after they had gone about one third of the distance a solitary and immensely large tiger shark had come upon them, and circled slowly around them, smelling them.

They had only one weapon between them, the long arrow in Ansong's hand. But before he could use it advantageously, the shark had, with three rapid bites of his saw-like teeth, killed and eaten Padjuri.

Ansong, half crazy with fear, and without consciously knowing what he did, had driven the spear into the shark's eye, before the latter could pull up his hard inner eyelid.

He had then taken a quick but deep breath and dived to the bottom, hiding in a crevice in the coral rock; coming out again only when his breath was giving out.

The shark had instinctively tried to locate his enemy for a counter-attack. But, being blinded, he attempted to find his foe through the use of his olfactory nerves. The strong odor of the blood

from his kill was being taken north by the current, and in following it, the shark had gone away.

When Ansong came to the surface again, the shark was gone, carrying off Ansong's only weapon, the arrow.

And Ansong morbidly and nervously proceed on his way to the beach as well as he could. His many hours of swimming and diving that day, without having had a complete meal, had weakened him. And the horror of seeing his cousin and companion of many years killed had added so much to his exhaustion that after the *banca* arrived at the beach, he was barely able to get out of it, and had to lie down in the sand.

McBane and Garcia took Ansong back to the town with them, and at the constabulary headquarters tried to get a better description of the vessel. Ansong was able to give only little additional information, but it was evident that the boat did not belong to Manila—especially because Ansong could not recollect having seen either any English letters nor any Arabian numbers on her.

He drew several graphical pictures of the Japanese characters on her bow, as well as he could remember them. With the aid of a Japanese dictionary, her name was thus read and entered on the records as the *hi pon ma ru*. And as such she was telegraphically reported to the authorities at Manila, where in time this case became lost amongst others of similar nature.

ANSONG had been more than glad to get away from that section of the islands. So he had readily accepted an offer from Captain McBane, especially since his new job took him to Malampayan Sound, on the island of Palawan. And in a year's time he had worked his way up to the position of a head-boy in charge of McBane's fish-traps.

McBane was sitting at his desk in his shore office, with pencil, paper, and slide rule before him, trying to figure the earning capacities of a new type of fish corral. Like many other men in far-off corners of the world, who, for lack of companionship with other intelligent men, had fallen into the habit of occasionally thinking out loud, he was saying:

"Now, let's see: thirty-eight men, times twenty-five days work, times seventy-five cents per man per day, is six hundred and thirty-five pesos, roughly; and we caught during the last month a daily average of. . . ."

"Sir!" the voice of Ansong at the door interrupted him.

"What is it?"

"There are no fish in any of the traps this morning."

"No fish?" McBane exclaimed. "What happened? I have just figured out, that we should have a daily average of forty-three kilos of fish. Did you look for holes? Maybe some sharks got into the traps?"

"No, Sir, there are no holes. I think the *balid-bitan* was in the trap, sir!"

"The *balid-bitan*? What the dickens is that?"

"That is a big bad snake, sir."

"All right, get out there then, and catch him."

"We can't catch him, sir. He eats people."

"You mean, he bites people."

"No, sir! He eats people!"

"Snakes don't eat people, Ansong. You ought to know better than that."

"Yes, sir, but this one does; he is a bad snake."

"What does he look like?"

"He is ten foot long, sir. He has a great big head, is red and green in color, and walks on his stomach."

"All snakes walk on their stomachs."

"Yes, but this one only walks on the middle of his belly. His head and half of his front he holds up very high in the

air. And all of the time he makes very much noise with his tail."

"What kind of a noise?"

"Like somebody was hitting two coconuts together, sir."

"Did you ever see this animal?"

"No, sir."

"Well, did anyone of the men see him eat our fish last night?"

"No, sir. But Ricardo and Matthias slept in the old house on the south point last night, opposite the traps. They wanted to torch for octopi at low tide; and they said that they heard him."

"All right, get those men over here."

Ansong returned a few minutes later with the two laborers. McBane questioned them at length about the noise, the time they had heard it, and what it had sounded like. Both men admitted that they had never laid eyes upon this feared animal, but that they had heard it several times before, and gave some stories of its man-eating habits.

McBane classified the monster with *buñglans, aswañgs,* vampires, and other fears so numerous in the Orient. He dismissed the men, and said to Ansong:

"Some thieves or pirates invaded these waters. Pick out four men and hike across the isthmus to the other traps. Don't get seen near the beach over there, and don't go near the fish-traps; but keep your eyes peeled for any strange boats. The chances are that the thieves who stole our fish are hiding out in Bolalo Bay over the day, and that they will try to rob our Inlulutoc Bay traps tonight. I am going over to Gulang-Gulang to get *Señor* Buenaventura and his boat. I don't think that the pirates have left the island yet; so if I don't find them in Bolalo Bay, I will be in Inlulutoc late this afternoon."

Ansong replied: "Yes, sir!" but he seemed to have something else on his mind. McBane noticed it and asked:

"Well, what is the matter?"

"Are we not going to have a very low tide this night, sir?"

"Yes, but what has that got to do with it?"

"I thought we might be able to take all men over there with us, since we have no work on this side today. We could then take the dynamite with us, and blow out that small coral bar which is always in the way of our boats. I also think that we could catch more fish over there, too, if that bar was not in the way. The fish would have a straight way to the trap then."

"That is not a bad idea. Yes, go ahead."

Señor Potenciano Buenaventura was doing the hardest part of his day's work, when McBane arrived in his launch off the bayside estate. He was jumping from his private dock into the water, trying to imitate the ever graceful dives of the Chinese Mermaid, Miss Young Shung King, winner of the Oriental Olympics.

He had been trying to acquire some grace for quite some time, but being heavy around the part usually encircled by his belt, he never managed to get beyond the stage of making a big splash upon the water.

"Hi there, Benny!" McBane hailed him, "you are just dressed the right way for the party. Have your boy gas up the boats."

He told Buenaventura of the empty fish-traps, and of his suspicion that the robbers were hiding in one of the bays at the mouth of the large Malampayan Sound. Buenaventura himself had several fish-traps in the bay, and within an hour their two motorboats were speeding away, throttles wide open.

The Malampayan Sound is about twenty miles long; beside being dotted with innumerable little islands, the coats contain one small inlet and bay after the other. With a few small exceptions, the entire shore is overgrown with mangroves, thus affording an ideal hiding place for small craft.

While Captain McBane had taken the west shore, Señor Buenaventura had inspected the eastern shore, and it was late in the afternoon when their boats met again at the bottle-neck opening to the Sound. They killed their engines, and were resting under the shade of some of the mangroves, the while smoking some *cigarillos*.

"Well," McBane started, "they are not inside of the sound. I did not expect them in here anyway. So I guess that we will find them either in the Bolalo Bay, just around this point, or they have gone outside already, and are hiding in some of the sea-side bays. We will have to be careful, here in Bolalo. We had better stick together instead of splitting up. Ready?"

"Yes, let's go."

ANSONG and the men arrived at the jungle's edge, opposite the fish-traps in the Olongo Inlet of Inlulutoc Bay, in time to have cooked a belated dinner, if Ansong had not prevented them from building a fire, and ordered them to go out and pick coconuts and fruits to eat, instead.

During one of the few stops he had climbed up a tree on a projecting hill knob, and had seen a strange boat go into the channel between Anchorage Island and the small land-tongue east of it.

Ansong now realized that after all no *balid-bitan* had eaten the fish, but that a robbery had been done. He also realized that these outsiders must be well acquainted with local waters, or they could not have piloted their vessel along through the many islands and rocks in this section of Palawan at night time. And the invaders would also know that there were no *barrios* on this side of the coast.

The boat looked like the certain one that had left him and Padjuri swimming. If it were not, then it was one just like it. Should he be mistaken, he would still notice it in time. But so far he considered it part of his religious duties to live up to the teachings of the Alcoran, and personally to revenge the death of his blood relative, Padjuri.

Although knowing that it was against the strict orders of Captain McBane to handle dynamite when the captain was not present, he opened some of the bundles and boxes and took out three sticks of number sixty straight, one number eight detonator, five rolls of cordeau, a few feet of fuse, and some heavy wrapping paper and cotton string.

Selecting his two friends, Ricardo and Jarata, to go with him, he left Miranda in charge of the other men and the supplies, with instructions to watch the trap, but to do nothing which might warn the foreign boat; and to tell the captain upon his arrival, that he, Ansong, had gone over to Olongo Point, to watch the invaders from there.

Dividing the load between them, Ansong and his companions made use of a hog trail to reach their destination without being seen. There Ansong asked his companions to scout around for some bananas, guavas, and other fruit for their lunch, while he would watch the strangers.

When they had gone, he sat down in the shade of a bamboo tree and cut the packing paper into four octagon-shaped pieces of about one square foot each. Then he took some tree-wax which he had collected on the way across the isthmus, and besmeared both sides of the paper pieces.

That done, he opened the three dynamite cartridges, dumped the brown powder in one pile in the middle of one of the papers, muttering to himself: "Three for us, eh?" He carefully folded the paper around the powder and made a ball of it, which he wrapped in the second sheet of paper.

Taking the ball into his hand, and

pressing and kneading it from all sides, so as to make as tight and small as possible, he folded the remaining papers around it, and finally wound it tightly with several dozen yards of the string, interknotting it here and there.

Next he cut off a small twig from the bamboo behind him, and after sharpening one end of it with his *bolo*, he pushed the point halfways into the globe. Withdrawing the twig again, he inserted the end of one of the cordeau strings, and smeared a lump of wax around the now plugged hole.

Then he cut off a dozen pieces of the string, each about two foot long, and after securely tying the string ends to the cordeau, about two inches away from its entrance into the sphere, he netted the strings around the ball. Testing the arrangement, and being assured that the cordeau had no chance of being pulled out, he gave the entire bomb a heavy coating of wax, and laid it aside.

With his *bolo* he next cut off four thin short bamboo tubings, and carefully cleaned them, inside and outside. Then he selected two Y-shaped branches of a small tree, stuck the single ends into the ground, and across the "Ys" he laid a four foot bamboo pole. Then he slowly and carefully unwound one of the cordeaus from its spool, rewinding it again on the bamboo pole.

Reaching the end of the first spool, he inserted the end into one of the four short bamboo tubings, spliced the beginning of the second spool to the end of the first, and worked the tubing over the splice. Thereupon he covered the entire union with treewax and continued the re-winding of the cordeaus until all five spools had been wound around the bamboo.

But he needed more treewax. Leaving Jarata to watch, he and Ricardo climbed the hill together. But they did not find any *almaciga* until they had reached an altitude of about seven hundred feet. After gathering as much as they could get into a small basket made of palm leaves, they climbed still higher up to a clearing to look for the captain's launch, which should have come into Inlulutoc Bay some time ago.

They finally saw the two motorboats come around the point of Bolalo Bay, some three miles north of them. They figured that the captain must have been delayed somehow, and that thus he would not get around to the Olango Inlet for at least three or four hours yet. This discovery pleased Ansong, because he was certain that the captain would not permit him to carry out his plans.

Picking up their load of treewax on the way down, and carrying it between them slung from a bamboo pole, they took the shortest route back; stopping only once to rest, and once when Ansong wanted to cut off some of the bark of a tree with pine needles.

While Ricardo and Jarata made two trips carrying the treewax and the cordeau further down hill, to a place closer to the water's edge, Ansong took the bark he had gathered, and with his *bolo* cut it into small shavings, which he placed into the half-shell of a coconut.

With a stone he rubbed the shavings into fine particles, added some waters from the muddy pool nearby, and after stirring and squeezing the mass, he dipped his undershirt into the solution, until his garment had turned a dark brown color.

Without wringing it out completely, he tied it to a small stick, and wafted it back and forth in the air in order to dry it partly and allow the dye to set. This was accomplished quickly, and he went down hill in search of his companions, who were squatting somewheres, concealed both by the edge of the jungle's undergrowth and the advancing darkness.

Uttering the low and creaky sound of the tree lizard, he soon located them by their replies of: "tuck-oo . . . oo . . . or . . . or."

Squatting near them, he tied the shirt sleevelets into a knot, partly filled this sack with the white and sticky *almaciga*, placed the ball of dynamite into the center, and then filled the rest of the shirt with tree wax, and tied another knot at the top.

He arose and placed the entire bundle on his head. Gently pressing it here and there to adjust it to the contour of his head, he tied it down with some thin rope-vines, and tested the arrangement by wiggling and shaking his head.

"Good. Let's go!" he announced, and pointed toward the beach. His companions stripped off their white cotton undershirts, picked up the cordeau, and followed him down to the playa, to a point directly opposite the Japanese vessel.

Here Ansong took the leading piece of the cordeau between his teeth, and walked into the waters, while Ricardo and Jarata were slowly paying out the cordeau from the pole. As soon as he reached deep water he began to swim with slow and careful movements, and without making the slightest noise or splash, and soon covered the few hundred yards to the vessel.

He stopped swimming, and began to tread water, while trying to perceive some life aboard her.

Now that he was close to her, he was sure. It was the same boat. When he came around to her bow, he saw again the Japanese writing. These foreign characters were too well impressed upon his mind.

"HI-PON MA-RU" Captain McBane had deciphered them out of the dictionary that day. "Hipon" was also a Tagalog word, meaning "shrimp." But in his mind there was no connection between these two words.

But, the captain had explained, from a slight change of position of one of the lines in the first character, it could read *Ha-pon Ma-ru. Hapon* also was a Tagalog word, and was the equivalent of night.

That seemed to fit in a little better, from Ansong's point of view. They had come to Zambales during the night, and had fled again when it was almost night. They had returned, in the middle of night, to steal fish; and now they seemed to be waiting for another night, to carry on their nefarious work.

He wondered what the name would mean, if it was translated into Tagalog, or Sulu, or English.

English! He had read a magazine once in which he did not understand many of the expressions used. The captain had told him he should not read such books; that the words were "slang."

One of those expressions had been: "Good Night! and now the meaning of it slowly dawned upon him.

But the occupants of the *Maru* here seemed to feel secure in their place of concealment. Apparently they also were waiting for the moon to rise. He could not notice any movements aboard, and it seemed the entire crew was sleeping now, in order to be fully awake later on for their nightly marauding.

Yet ever careful, he loosened the package from his head, readjusted the cordeau in his mouth, and after peeling off the undershirt, carefully to lose as little as possible of the valuable *almaciga*, he dived and pressed the white and viscid mass amidships against the bottom of the vessel.

Holding on to her keel with his left hand, he exerted a pressure with his right until he felt the ball of dynamite in the middle lie up against the planking. Then he tightened the soft wax down around the edges, released the cordeau from his mouth, and swimming towards her bow again, he came to the surface.

Both hands on her stem, while breathing and resting his body, he looked up, as though he wanted to take one last glance at her hated name.

Then he dived, and silently swam off in the direction from which he had come, thinking:

"And this is one for you!"

When he felt the water getting shallow, he stopped swimming, and waded ashore through the gently lapping waves. He found Ricardo and Jarata sitting in the sand and holding on to the bamboo pole which still had several yards of the cordeau wound around it.

Jarata selected two pieces of bamboo and split them with his *bolo*. Sitting down, he rapidly rubbed the end of one of the pieces in the channel of the other piece in order to kindle it.

Ricardo came over, squatted afront of him, and took off his hat, from which he extracted a rolled up leaf, which had been held to the inside of the hat with some bamboo slivers. Unwrapping the leaf he produced four long brown *cigarillos*, and asked:

"Ansong, is it good now to smoke?"

"Why not, brother; have you anything there?"

"We have four *cigarillos*."

"Oh—three for us, and one. . . ."

McBANE'S and Buenaventura's search of Bolalo Bay had been futile. The latter's engine had also burnt out a bearing, and they had to anchor the boat in a small inlet, and make the outside trip to Inlulutoc Bay in the captain's launch.

While *Señor* Buenaventura advanced the theory that the thieves were hiding up north, around the limestone cliffs of the Bacuit Bay, Captain McBane preferred to believe that they were south of them.

"Benny, in case we don't find them down here, you can run this launch up to Bacuit, take two of my men with you, and send them over to the radio station to make a report to the coast guard."

"And what are you going to do?" Buenaventura asked.

"I expect them to come into that bay tonight to rob my other traps; they don't know that these outside traps belong to me also. I have all of my men over there, and I'll put them into small *bancas;* while the robbers are busy stealing my fish in their small boat, or boats, we will board the big vessel. Then, when the coastguard cutter comes down here, tomorrow or the next day, we can . . ."

"Boom!"

The loud and reverberating report of a nearby explosion, sounding not unlike that of a shot fired from a large caliber gun, interrupted McBane.

Buenaventura looked at McBane and said: "What was that?"

"That's what I would like to know myself. The boys took dynamite over there to blow out some rocks; but they had no orders to go ahead with the work tonight. We'll know in a few minutes; here is the west point now."

McBane opened the throttle and in twenty minutes they were at the beach where the trap-tending dugouts were pulled up. Ansong and the men arose from around the small fire they had built, and pulled the bow of the launch out of the water.

"Ansong! Come here!"

"Yes, sir."

"There was some sort of an explosion in this district. Did you hear it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it in this bay here?"

"Yes, sir."

"It sounded like dynamite to me. Is that what it was?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was it? An accident?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can't you say anything else?"

"Yes, sir."

McBane fumed. Irrespective of all their good qualities, his laborers were all

alike in one respect. They were almost incapable of telling a story. Sentences and words had to be squeezed out of them, like drops out of a lemon. He barked, "Well, damn it! Say it!"

"Yes, sir! You said this morning that we would blow out that rock that was in the way. But you didn't come here all afternoon, and I thought that maybe you had caught the thieves, and would not come at all. And since we wouldn't have another low tide for a month, I believed it good to get the charges ready. So I took a small *banca* out; but when I was standing on the rock to test the holes for the dynamite, a big shark came along and was swimming around me. Oh, he swam around me for a long time, sir—for more than one hour."

"Well, then what?"

"Well, sir, he didn't want to go away; I think he was very hungry. And you know how scared I am of sharks now; so I thought I would kill him, and I threw all the dynamite at him."

"How much dynamite was that?"

"Only three sticks, sir."

"Only! Hm. Was the charge loaded?"

"Yes, sir. And then he swam off with the dynamite in his belly."

"Eh?"

"Yes, sir. He swam over to Anchorage Island with it."

"He swam over to Anchorage Island with it? And the fuse didn't die out in his wet stomach? How many feet of fuse did you have on it?"

"Three foot, sir."

"Three foot, eh? And him swimming all the way from here to Anchorage Island? Why, that is more than half a mile; that would take him at least five minutes to get there. That is not correct, Ansong; three foot of fuse will burn only a minute and a half."

"Yes, sir, that's correct. But I had cordeau tide on to the fuse. And when he swam away the cordeau spool got caught behind the rock, and kept on unwinding."

"Then the fuse wasn't in his stomach, but right there on the rock. And you, of course, split the fuse and ignited it, just before the shark had pulled all of the cordeau out of your hands?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that cordeau and the shark reached all the way over to the island?"

"O, no, sir! Only as far as the boat."

Captain McBane looked at *Señor* Buenaventura, slowly nodded his head, and, turning back to his head boy, he said:

"Ansong, just what kind of a boat was that?"

"I don't know, sir. There was a large black boat coming out of the Anchorage Island channel; it looked like a Japanese fishing vessel I saw one time. And when she was rounding the point, the shark must have run against it, and then he exploded."

"And the boat? Where is she now?"

"I don't know, sir. I didn't see it any more after that." Ansong lowered his eyelids and added: "I didn't mean to waste any dynamite, sir, and I didn't intend to wreck any boats; it was just an accident."

McBane patted Ansong on the shoulder and said: "Forget it, boy. I don't think that there was a boat in here." He looked around at the other men, and then up at the moon, and continued:

"I think that there was a cloud passing before the moon, and what you really saw was its shadow upon the waters. Get ready now to blow out that rock, and when you are finished, hike across to the other side."

Turning to *Señor* Buenaventura he said: "Let's go and bring your boat home." Then they went into McBane's launch, which the boys had pushed back into the water, and after they had gone a few miles Buenaventura asked: "Say, Cap', what are you going to enter in your monthly report about this?"

"Just what I have seen."

"Well, what did you see?"

"Nothing."

MAMOOK THE MIGHTY

By Tom Roan

MAMOOK, the silvertip, sat on the narrow ledge and scratched her rump. It was late in the afternoon and the last day of October. The high, sharp air of the Montana Rockies was almost startlingly clear. A mile straight down from the ledge wound the river, a turbulent ribbon dotted with amazingly sharp-cut splotches of blue, where great pools eddied in the bed of the stream and the water sobbed and shimmered over shale and rough boulders. Beyond the river, looming dark and green, the timber walling the western slopes of the valley mounted skyward, pine and fir-clad hill upon hill, until they seemed to pierce the great dome of the heavens.

Mamook was at peace with the world. Behind her romped her two half-grown cubs, Heehee and Polaklie. They rolled and tossed back there in the den, halting now and then to quarrel and cuff, with Heehee the aggressor for the fun and Polaklie cross and gloomy and wanting to be left strictly alone to sit sucking his foot in the corner. Polaklie had been like that from the beginning, thus his name, which meant *gloom,* while Heehee's meant *fun,* and Mamook's *action* in Chinook, the trade language of the Indians from the Great Plains to the Arctic Circle.

None of which mattered in the least to Mamook, except when the cubs grew too noisy and required a box on the ear that made their teeth rattle.

It was Mamook's fourth year on the ledge. She had been a good neighbor to all the wild folk around her, killing when the necessity of life demanded it, but never wantonly. She was not a particular feeder. Down in the river there were fish aplenty, the fast ones and the stupid ones, the lazy ones and the spry. There were fruits and berries, juicy and bulbous roots for the digging. Occasionally there were eggs, any kind or size or shape, fresh or aged. There were bugs and beetles under rotted logs, and now and then she found honey cached in rocks or the bole of a hollow tree; though a diet of honey always meant howling and yowling fight, with little

devils swarming and plunging in their red-hot hooks. Eat, sleep, and be merry was her philosophy of life.

She was nine feet long and weighed a thousand pounds. In nature she was a gentle, curious, unspoiled baby—or a raging, snarling demon that never questioned the odds in a fight. A tiger she would have killed with a blow; a lion she would have eaten for dinner. No living thing among all the wild folk that walked or crawled or flew was any faster or more ferocious when it came to the business of fighting The cougar gave her the right-of-way of the ledges; even the lynx, one of the most savage of the savage, would have deserted den and kittens in the face of her charge.

Man was the only natural enemy of Mamook. Man with his incessant cunning, his high-powered "sporting" rifles, his saw-toothed traps. Man, the weakling, the trifling, the braggard and the coward! Hand for hand, tooth for tooth, she could have whipped a thousand of the bravest of them that ever grew.

AS a cub she had liked men, though from the beginning the very smell of them had told her they were far from being a trustworthy lot. Yet there had been something about them that had appealed to her and filled her with a half-hungry longing to be near them; and then had come the cold, windy fall when she had heard the first savage barking of their guns.

Mamook, a most inquisitive cub, had gone to investigate. Her findings had been far from comforting. The crackings and barkings of the guns had had something to do with Skookum, her mother. There, at the head of a snow-checkered valley, Mamook had found Skookum, the strong—a big, sprawled-out thing with a half-dozen rifle balls through her heart and her rich, warm coat stripped from her body and carried away by the men.

Mamook had sat down in the snow and cried, her baby paws to her eyes and the tears rolling down her cheeks. Strange beings, men, who took one's coat and left one's carcass lying untouched on the ground for the buzzards and the coyotes to fight over. No other animal—beast, brute, buzzard nor snake —would have done such a thing. It was Mamook's one big mystery of life. One could never tell when men would come, nor why. They shot the ducks along the river; they shot the wild geese. They shot at anything that walked, crawled or flew.

There were scars on Mamook's right foreleg, the tell-tale marks of a saw-toothed trap. Down the valley in a grove of tamarack young trees were still scarred in a fifty-yard circle, where, just a year ago, Mamook had raged and snarled and fought, beating at everything in sight with steel clinging to her foot and leg. A steel heart had whipped a steel trap, had torn the thing from her and sent it hurling, drag-log and all, into the river. Woe to man had he met Mamook that day.

It was the same thing when it came to the bullet-scars in her shoulder. Only by the grace of their gods had the men escaped. Mamook had charged them, full-tilt, her fury caring naught for the cracking of the powerful rifles and the bullets slashing her with the sting of a thousand bees.

Mamook had not known that there was a man within a hundred miles of her until the rifles started their reverberating crashings. She had been engaged in the simple and peaceful business of picking berries under one of the cliffs when a bullet knocked her down.

It had amazed and dazed Mamook. A nice lot of juicy berries had spilled out of her mouth. Just like a man or a woman struck a quick, unexpected blow, she had rubbed her paw across her face, and had whimpered from the sheer hurt and lack of understanding of the thing.

And then another bullet had raked her. Mamook had heard the distant reports of the guns. This was war!

But more amazing than the shock of the unexpected bullet had been the terror of the men. One had dropped his rifle. The other had turned, running down the river and yelling at the top of his lungs. The first one had promptly dived into the swift river, right where Mamook could have caught him, she being seventy times the better swimmer of any man, but Mamook had done the foolish thing. She had followed the other man. In a thicket of boulders and trees he had given her the slip, and the next she had seen of him he was on a horse and galloping away.

Mamook had returned to the river. On the other side of it she had found where the man who had dropped his gun had taken to a horse. She had recrossed the river, found the rifle, and her fury had had to be content with the business of flailing the fire out of the thing over a near-by boulder.

At the time she would have torn any man limb from limb and left him a bloody, shapeless thing on the ground. But anger never lived long with Mamook. It was just a week later, with her wounds rapidly healing but still full of aches now and then, that she had stalked a man for hours along the river, just to be near him and watch him fish. She had the curiosity of some highly intelligent monkey. She copied the man's moves as though she, too, held a fishing-rod, and—even though the man never knew he was watched by this lordly lordess of forest and mountain ledges—her eyes burned with the satisfaction of work well done every time a fine extra-wily trout was hooked. And once, suddenly turning back downstream, the man had passed within a yard of her. She could have reached out from her place of hiding and slapped his head clean and clear from his shoulders with but a single blow, but there was no desire for it.

She had been like that the day she had found the baby crying in a hammock between two trees down the river. It's father and mother were busy with their fishing and a boy of ten, left to watch the camp, lay asleep on a flat rock thirty feet away. Mamook's curiosity had got the best of her. Like a big brown shadow she had stolen into the camp, reared up on her hind feet and looked into the hammock.

And the baby! A man or a woman would have fainted when that long, broad bear-face looked down on them, but the baby started to coo immediately. Its cheeks smelled sweet. Sure enough, they were when Mamook licked them. She really washed the baby's face, and the baby lay there, chuckling and pawing at Mamook's fur with tiny hands. Mamook found its bottle, tore off the nipple and stole the milk, and washed the baby's face again with her long tongue.

There is no manner of telling what Mamook might have done. American folk lore, especially that which deals with the early settler, records many a tale of a bear adopting a baby to mother. From India comes the story, with perfectly good authority, of children suckled by a wolf; and from the dark jungles of Malay comes the tale—backed by equally good authority—of the tiger that took the baby to whelp.

Mamook knew none of the tales, and cared about them less. The baby was sweet and it was as cunning and playful as any cub. Had there been milk in her breasts aching to be spilled, Mamook might have adopted it on the spot. Had the notion struck her, all the howling and fighting of the man, the woman and the youth could not have deterred her a whit. Against tooth or fang, bullet or trap, she would have protected it to the last breath and the last drop of blood in her body. And Lord, what a buxom

mother Mamook would have been! A thousand pounds of sweetness, a thousand pounds of hell!

The youth had awakened, cutting short the fun with a yell. Mamook, ever thrifty, had stolen a slab of bacon and vanished in the bushes. Yet, longer than the hurt of her wounds from both the rifles and the great trap, had remained the memory of the baby. Mother love was strong. Mamook had once mothered a black bear's cub, had fought for it and killed for it the same as her own. At times she was a most sympathetic soul.

NOW and then she visited the old-man bald-face down the ledges. He seemed as old as the mountains. His teeth were gone; his eyes were dim. In place of claws he had a few horny splinters. One foot was crooked. He moved with creaking joints and always grumbled at every step. No longer could he fish; no longer could he hunt; yet he seemed to be always up and about when there was meat to be had. Mamook never argued the question with him. Her lightning-fast paws had flipped him many a fish from the river. Here and there she dug him up a fat gopher or allowed him to gnaw away and growl to his wrinkled old heart's content on one of the choice ends of her kills. A younger bear trying it would have had to fight for his life on the spot. But, apparently, age was a thing to be respected, whether or not mankind saw the wisdom of it. Mamook tolerated it like a lady and was not above pulling down a bush of berries for the old gentleman now and then.

Mamook looked down the valley and scratched the side of her rump. She yawned and took a little nap, lying there with her great muzzle on her paws. Heehee and Polaklie, tired of their capers, also took a nap. The far-away crash of a rifle awoke Mamook with a start.

She was not quite as smart in some things as the deer, the elk and the mountain goat and sheep, otherwise she would have known that the hunting season had opened. Herds of deer and elk had been coming up the valley for two or three days, all of them making for the higher and more desolate mountain ranges. Some—though Mamook did not know it—had made bee-lines for the nearest game preserves with the uncanny wisdom which told them that there in the preserves lay safety.

Down the valley a group of city-bred sportsmen were coming. Former cowboys and forest rangers were with them as guides. There were nine men in the party and sixteen pack and saddle horses, though only three of the men were really hunters. Their equipment consisted of everything the "modern" hunter should carry and wear into the hills. There were folding cots and folding bathtubs, swanky chairs that wrapped themselves around one like a hammock. Their rifles were the highest and latest in calibers, with all due consideration given to velocity, trajection and shocking power.

Oleman, the bald-face, arrived a few minutes before Mamook caught her first glimpse of the main part of the hunters. He came shambling up the ledge—blinder, it seemed, than before. Oleman was all a-jitter. He whined and he growled. Age and bad teeth, to say nothing of the fact that he was losing much of his hair in ugly spots, had brewed vinegar in his blood. His nerves were no longer what they had been. He was like a complaining old woman. He poked his scarred muzzle close to Mamook's ear and cried. She growled at him, lifted a great paw as if about to slap him off the ledge and end his career on the jagged rocks a mile below. His dim old eyes saw the danger. He turned with surprising quickness for such an old, old man. He sat down with his back to her and a couple of yards away. He

scratched a great red welt on his belly where the hair was missing, and sniffed the air to southward.

MAMOOK, all aware that some danger threatened, sat up and fanned the air with both paws, sniffing. Her motions were those of a man wildly motioning with both hands for somebody to come forward. It was merely the grizzly way of sampling the wind for danger.

The cubs came out of the den. They saw Oleman, and were instantly ready for a fight or a frolic with the old fellow. Heehee led the way. Polaklie was about to follow suit in his slow, gloomy fashion. Mamook cuffed them both a blow that would have sent a world's heavyweight champion to the hospital. It upset them and sent them rolling back in the den, where they quarreled among themselves like puppies denied their pinch of fun. Then Heehee nipped Polaklie near the root of the tail. Polaklie whirled like a flash, lashing out with a vicious paw that Heehee ducked and darted on to the darkest corner there in the great hole in the cliff.

Oleman was still grumbling. Mamook growled and looked in the direction his wrinkled old nose was pointing. It was a growl that went back in the den and instantly silenced the cubs. There was a low, deep, vibrant warning in that growl. It was Mamook's "Let be!"

Mamook had seen something. It was far down the valley, a winding string of movement strung out for almost a hundred yards. It was the hunting party. Even a grizzly could see that the horses were overloaded, their packs bloated like a fat woman's petticoat ballooning in a prankish wind.

It was one of those fall invasions, coming right at the usual time when a quiet, peaceful sadness was settling over the great hills and everything was in the making for a long winter's sleep. Mamook remembered the nervous herds of deer, the elk, the goats and the sheep. The devil was to pay again, as surely as the sun was turning blood-red yonder above the timbered hills. Certain of the wild folk were doomed for misery and death.

Small wonder that Oleman was worried! He was feeble and quite jerky on his pins. His smeller, as any bear could have seen, was none too good, especially in the mornings after an all-night of coughing and sputtering, turning and tossing and trying to ease this old bone and that. He seemed to know that he was no longer worthy of a good fight or a race. Perhaps there was a sneaking little feeling that he was doomed.

Mamook thought not of herself, but she did think of her cubs. Oh, they were husky enough and capable of waging quite a fight, but they were young and foolish, like the boy left that time to watch the camp. One could never tell what a cub would do, especially one like Heehee who—for the sheer fun of it—had once pinched a rattler on the tail right while that unsociable gentleman was blind and cranky in the business of shedding his skin.

Polaklie was almost as bad, though he had never suffered and howled for a week with a rattlesnake's bite. He was the personification of gloom. That in itself was enough to get him into trouble. He was such a headstrong yap! If Satan came after him and he was tired and in no mood to hurry, down he would have popped, and nature would simply have had to run its course. Mamook had had troubles galore with that cub. He was, in short, a much spoiled brat. One had to burst his rind every now and then.

Flat on their bellies, Mamook and Oleman lay and watched the packtrain. It crawled on up the valley, while the red sun dropped behind the timber and the sky turned purple and gold. Long, serpentine shadows stretched from the western slopes to the foot of the

cliffs. A swarm of birds swooped down the valley, bound for their old roosting place in the tamaracks. Three grossly fat and bespectacled men on sweat-lathered horses greeted them with an outlandish blazing of gun-fire. The birds wheeled and curved away with a frightened crying and chirping into the timber. A few of them dropped. The most were too dazed and shocked to know what was happening, except that mankind had caught up with them again.

The fat men gesticulated and yelled at each other. After a time they were coming on with their saddles covered with birds and the dropping feathers leaving a trail behind them.

Once to the place where they were going to camp—west of Mamook's ledge—the three men were like army colonels with bees in their breeches. It was as though war had been declared and they were about to throw up breastworks and meet the enemy there and then. They sat hard in their saddles, giving the horses no ease as a natural horseman would have done, and galloped their tired mounts up and down the river. They were as noisy as crows discovering something to fight over.

In the gathering twilight the camp was pitched amid the yelling and shouting of orders. Darkness dropped its gentle curtain. The moon soared up, a great, round, bald-faced thing. The stars came out. Through the gentle shadows and the mighty stillness that finally settled with the smell of boiling coffee and frying bacon, a camp-fire gleamed like an old sot's drunken eye.

MAMOOK was disgusted with it, but she and Oleman had had sense enough to keep still. Now, with darkness settled, they would have to move on and leave the old den. From all the outlay of tents and camping paraphernalia spread out on the bank of the river, it was evident that the hunters were to make this their headquarters. None of the wild folk for miles around would be safe now. The birds would have to leave their old homes in the tamaracks. Man had come to stay awhile. It was lucky for the wild geese and the ducks that they had already started their long journey southward. Shooting in the hills would send the laggard flocks on their way.

Slowly, Mamook stood up and shook herself. Oleman whimpered. Mamook silenced him with a low growl. She moved back into her den and routed out the cubs. Instinctively they knew that danger had come. But Oleman, though he knew the same thing, still wanted to quarrel about it. He hated the idea of being routed out of his home; even while he followed Mamook and the cubs, he complained, in spite of Mamook's growls, of the shameful state of affairs that had befallen his lot.

Mamook moved northward. In places the ledges were so narrow that the walls of rock to their right threatened to rake them off and send them plunging five thousand feet down in empty space. It was nothing short of amazing that Mamook managed some of the turns.

Oleman followed grumpily. They climbed up through a steep, slippery gash in the rocks and came out by the rattlers' dens. They marched in single file along the rim of the cliffs for three miles and better, and Mamook again led the way downward. It must have been midnight when they struck the river, several miles above the hunters' camp.

It was not comforting to Oleman. The air was sharp and almost bitter-cold. He paused now and then to run rubbing paws up and down his belly where the hair was missing. He sat down a number of times, as if he would not budge another inch, but Mamook and the cubs kept going. He let them get out of sight twice, and hurried to catch up with them. He could not stand it to be left alone there in the shadows. Perhaps

the gnawing fear kept growing in his heart that his days were numbered.

Mamook was tireless. She cut back into the towering cliffs and hills, making her way straight toward Old Baldy, a giant mountain looming tall and stately like a silver-crowned throne above the timberline. Up, ever up. Over this ledge and that. Once, just before she struck the forest atop of a tall cliff, Mamook had to turn back and give Oleman help to get him over a ledge. She did it with paw and fang, catching him in the loose skin at the back of the neck with her teeth and hooking supporting claws under his elbow. Once up and in the clear, she cuffed him soundly for his stupidity and told him a thing or two with a half-crying whine out of the side of her mouth.

Dawn found them above the timberline. They were as hungry as four bears could possibly be. They found berries in the bushes. Mamook turned over a few tons of rock covering a dozen gopher holes. Oleman and the cubs dined at her expense. They slaked their thirst at the snowline.

It was when they had rounded the base of Old Baldy's white-capped dome of eternal snow that Mamook stopped with a cough-like growl. A new issue faced them. In the center of a great, bowl-shaped valley north of Old Baldy's steep slopes lay another hunters' camp. It was even larger than the first. Mamook sat down, sniffed the wind, and took stock of the situation.

There were fully twenty-five horses in this big camp. Tents flapped in the early morning wind. Blue smoke arose from a large camp-fire, around which were seated a half-score of men. Little dots kept trotting back and forth behind the men. Mamook studied them, not at all sure of what they were for two or three minutes. This one was brown; that one was black; here and there they ran to spots. Four-legged animals, to be sure, but what kind of animals were they? A growl rumbled from Mamook's throat when she at last realized that they were dogs. Bear dogs!

Here was real trouble! Not content with his high-powered rifles and his mushrooming bullets, man had brought along an army of Satan's own concoction to harass the wild folk. It could end in but one thing. Man would have expressed it as a hell of a fight.

Mamook looked to the west. She saw a thin line of blue smoke rising far away in the timber and sheltered from the wind by the great shoulder of a mountain. She looked to the east. A veil of blue hung over the trees at the head of a little lake. Hunters all around!

OLEMAN nudged her and whined in her ear for her to hunt up a few more gophers. Mamook paid no attention to him. There was too much dire tragedy afoot in the land. She looked back at the camp, where the dogs were frolicking about. The men were leaving their fire and saddling a group of their horses.

Mamook finally communicated the danger to Oleman and the cubs. Oleman whined and cried a few tears. He communicated it to Mamook that she had been a fool to leave their ledges back there in the cliffs above the river. Polaklie got panicky and wadded himself up against Mamook's great belly. Heehee grinned a one-sided grin, and seemed to think it all a lot of fun. Mamook boxed his ear to teach him his manners in front of his elders and to let him know firmly that danger was on the walk-about. There was no sense in a cub acting up like that!

Mamook did not know that one Mule-Face Frank, a half-breed Flathead Indian, was studying the slopes of Old Baldy at that very moment through a powerful telescope. It was just another little wrinkle on the horn of man's cunning. If his own eyes could not see far enough, he found means and ways of

equipping himself with ones that would.

Alone, with only herself to fight for, Mamook's spirit would have been far stronger. She looked at her cubs; she looked at Oleman, sitting there drooling and still thinking about gophers. He was like a yawning pocket always aching to be filled. At times he acted as if his brain was as dry and creaky as his bones. He looked at Mamook, licked his gnarled chops, and poked his old nose closer to whinny-cry in her ear. Mamook promptly knocked him down.

Mamook turned, growled as if to say, "Come on, all of you!" and led the way back along the base of Old Baldy's dome. Of the four evils surrounding her, she preferred the one to eastward. It seemed further away. Besides, she was not going to head straight toward it. She knew her Old Baldy. She would swing down the dangerous slopes and head away in a bee-line toward a jumbled array of hills, mountains and ledges to the southeast.

Oleman slobbered and grumbled. Polaklie finally got tired of so much going. He sat down and refused to budge. Mamook took the situation in hand. She gave him a cuffing that he would remember. She literally set the root of his tail afire. She boxed his ears. She laid the law down then to Oleman, stood right up belly to belly to him, put her mouth close to one of his scarred ears, and let him know in so many business-like growls that he was the next on the list for an old-fashioned trimming unless he held the peace and kept his face closed about gophers when there were so many dogs and men let loose in their wilderness home. It had the desired effect for almost four hours.

For the dogs were coming. She heard them back there in the ledges behind. Their voices rose and fell, some hoarse, some drum-like, some sharp and fierce, others long and doleful and sad. The hills caught the sounds, rocketing them back and forth, now high, now low, like the tuning of some somber orchestra.

HIGH up on a flat, boulder-strewn plateau, Oleman laid down to die. He could go no further. His race was run. It looked like Oleman was through, but the mighty Mamook lashed him to his feet with resounding cuffs that sent the hair flying from his scrawny rump. She drove him on to within three hundred yards of a ragged cleft in a cliff, and there once more Oleman gave himself up to the damned. Mamook thrashed him, pounded him, and bit him, while the cubs—now full aware of the danger—streaked on for the foot of the cliff.

Oleman was through this time. He lay there sobbing and crying on the ground. And then the dogs arose in a great pack on the plateau rim, like a mottled cloud sweeping along the ground.

Mamook turned and looked at her cubs, still streaking it for the crevice in the cliff. She looked at the dogs; she looked at Oleman. Perhaps she pitied the old fellow lying there. She whined at him. She made a half-crooning sound in her throat. It was no use. Oleman would not budge. She saw then that the pads of Oleman's feet were covered with blood. The fast pace over the sharp shale and jagged stones had been too hard on the old flesh.

And then another sound. Mamook turned and looked at her cubs. Across the plateau was streaming another pack of dogs, going like mad to cut off the cubs from the crevice. Where they came from, Mamook never knew. They were there. That was enough. Mamook instantly forgot Oleman. She whirled. Mad with the lust to kill, she charged like the fastest race horse.

It was there in the mouth of the crevice, just a jump ahead of the dogs, that Mamook whirled, placed her back to the escaping cubs going up the crevice, and made her stand, a thousand pounds of dynamite primed for the explosion. She was standing, the full nine feet of her, great arms spread, legs

braced, her eyes blazing, great mouth snarling, the long fangs aglint in the dazzling sunlight.

Out there on the plain in front of her Oleman had already been attacked. The old man of the ledges was up, back to a boulder, fighting his last fight. Once great paws and arms that would have dared an elephant to fight were beating the air. Dogs swarmed him like clouds of raging hornets. He slapped them away, gutted them with blows, and once sent a head flying. He was old and shaky, but he was showing them all how a grizzly could meet death and look it unflinchingly in the eye.

Then the men! Churning saddles, pounding hoofs, and fine rifles all aglitter in the sunlight. They swooped toward Oleman, yelling to the dogs. A rifle crashed, another and another. Oleman went down, with dogs swarming all over him. But it was not for long. Oleman came up. Dogs fell away from him. Oleman was making his last hopelessly desperate charge.

A horse reared, plunged, and pitched like a wildly rocking chair. A rider was out of his saddle, sprawling on the ground. Now, without regard to the dogs, all the men were firing at Oleman. He went down. He came up. The man who had been thrown was trying to run. Oleman was after him. He went down a yard behind the man from the impact of another heavy rifle bullet, and yet he was not through. He was up, a raging, tearing, clawing thing. He got close enough for one blow. He delivered it, a quick, slashing, right-handed stroke that caught the fleeing man somewhere close to the back of the neck. The man was lifted from the ground and bludgeoned through the air, to land ten feet away in a huddled mass.

Oleman was down then, the frantic thundering and crashing of the rifles going on all around him. He staggered up once more, the dogs rolling off of him like spilling water. Like a boxer whose legs were too tired to carry him another step, he stood there, waving once-great arms for his attackers to come in close and fight. A heavy bullet knocked him off his feet again. He was down then, for the last time, with the dogs swarming atop of him and filling the plateau with their savage wailing of delight.

And Mamook— She looked like the great fighting mother of all the imps of hell. Already the pack of dogs that had been after Heehee and Polaklie had struck her, but it was not an old man bear this time. The great paws and arms never missed a stroke. She hit dogs; she stamped them underfoot; she tore them with tooth and fang. She hit no dog twice, and sometimes she hit two at once. She tore them apart, crushed their skulls like egg-shells, and everytime she struck some dog went out in a crimson Valhalla.

Many of the dogs in that pack had hunted the brown and black bears of California. Most of them had never tackled a grizzly. Those that lived through the flying hair, hide, blood and guts would never want to tackle another.

She cleared the mouth of that crevice. She cleared it with neatness and dispatch. A cyclone could have handled her. A powerful express rifle might have pulled her down with a shot. No dogs could do it. They were fools enough to jump at her throat. None ever reached it. One did seize her by the nose. She killed a dog to the right and left with that snarling thing swinging to her nose, and then she killed him, tore him apart, and hurled him forty feet away.

The men were closing in on her when she turned to flee. A bullet smashed against the rocks just above her head. Two dogs flung themselves on her back. They might have been small monkeys clinging and howling to the back of a bull-elephant charging down a foe. Mamook went up that crevice, *fast.*

HEEHEE and Polaklie, for once in their lives, had done the right thing. The crevice curved like a great, deep ditch, sloping upward steadily in the rocks. With Mamook the battling rear-guard of their steady retreat, they hustled on and on. They came to a twelve-foot wall of almost smooth rock. Here it took scrambling and growling, but they made it to a narrow ledge above it. Now they could look back on the plateau. They saw Oleman's fight, saw Oleman go down and down until it had been the last of him.

It had been a little foolish for Oleman to die like that; yet one could never tell just what a bear would do, especially one like Oleman, who so often seemed tired of living. Yet, with death upon him, Oleman had fought a glorious fight, disgracing none of his ancestors when it came time for him to go down the dark road where old bears were supposed to go.

There was something reassuring about it, something that made Heehee want to turn back and fight. There was no way of telling what was happening to Mamook, though her snarls rose with the yapping and fighting of the dogs below to tell that she, like Oleman, was making it hot for her foes.

Slipping along the ledge, hidden from the men below by rocks and occasional bushes, Heehee and Polaklie saw that something dire and terrible had happened to the man Oleman had knocked to earth. Two horses were being rushed up. The man was being picked up in a sling-like thing. Now he was being swung between the two horses. It seemed a little strange to Heehee and Polaklie that they didn't take his hide off right there on the spot. The fellow was surely downed and in no condition to fight back, and that was the way man seemed to want everything to which he laid his hand.

But others were not helping with the man Oleman had mauled. They were soon firing their heavy guns toward the mouth of the crevice. A scrambling of feet, shale flying, dogs yapping and a tremendous snarling filling the air. Heehee and Polaklie looked down from their ledge and saw Mamook. Was she coming! Dogs clung to her. Her nose streamed blood. She arrived at the twelve-foot wall. There she halted. She brushed away the dogs clinging to her as if they were flies. She threw one of them out of the crevice and over the lip of a forty-foot cliff. Heehee and Polaklie could not tell what happened to the others, but there was a devil of a scrambling and crying there in the crevice below Mamook, and then Mamook appeared, hurling herself to the top of the wall with a snarl.

She was still full of fight when she joined the cubs. They had never seen her in such a fury. They were frightened at the very sight of her. They broke into a wild run, with her right behind them. Several times as they passed openings along the lip of the ledge they heard the slapping report of things striking the rocks above and below them.

Mamook was roaring her defiance. Now and then it looked as if she would whirl and go back in spite of the cubs. There was nothing gentle and soothing about her now. She did not take the trouble to even lick her nose.

Winding and twisting ever upward, they came to another wide plateau. Beyond it the country seemed to drop sheer away. Beyond the great drop loomed other mountains with a waterfall streaking downward through a V-shaped gash between two distant peaks.

Mamook hurried the cubs along. For a little while there were no sounds of dogs behind them, no shouting, nothing but a great silence. The cubs shuffled on. Mamook followed doggedly, licking at her nose. They came to the southeast rim of the plateau. It was down, down, down now, with Mamook ever alert for

any danger that might beset them.

They climbed higher and higher into an almost impassable country, and now the dogs came on. Horns blew to them, trying to call the dogs back. Somehow the fools had found their way up over the ledges where the fight had taken place. Nervous brutes, all yapping and dog-yodeling for another chance to do battle.

Far up on a great tableland, they surrounded Mamook for the second time. Her patience was all gone. She could not stand this thing. Those blowing horns in the distance meant nothing to her. She did not know that the bear-hunters' camp had been hastily broken behind her. She did not know that men were tearing and clawing at their camp equipment, that Oleman, even though it had cost him his life, had turned the tide for all the grizzly folk. Hunters without dogs would mean nothing now. The cracking of guns had already sent the grizzly folk hurrying for their safest and deepest dens.

But those dogs! Horns and calls had had no effect on them. They were a foolish breed. It was as though they had reverted to the wild, that their spirits had been freed and the hunger of blood was upon them.

It was the last fight. There must have been twenty-five of the dogs. They had grown wise to the ways of battle. As if they had hunted bears all their lives and knew exactly how the work was to be done, they circled. Mamook and her cubs were cut off. There was no wall or crevice now to put one's back to. This job had to be done in the open.

Heehee and Polaklie forgot that business of whimpering like small boys. Here was their first fight, one no longer to be avoided. They answered it as grizzly cubs would. They had seen Oleman die. There was no quarter in this business. They stood on their hind feet and backed their rumps to the rump of the snarling and mighty Mamook. Not nearly so loud were their snarls of defiance, but they carried equal courage, and their hearts thumped with the song of the fight.

IT must have lasted an hour. No men came now. The dogs circled and recircled. Mamook and the cubs took the first rush in splendid fighting fashion. They were like soldiers from some beaten and battered army making their last stand. They neither asked for quarter nor gave it. Heehee killed his first dog with a blow. Polaklie, just a little stupid at the start, crushed his to death in his arms and tore out the hound's throat. He was better after that, banging away with furious paws and arms. Now and then Mamook's great arms and paws swept in a circle, clearing everything around her except the cubs. She was so sure, so lightning fast. She missed but once, a right-paw stroke that just slipped past a lunging dog's nose, but the great paw got the dog on the backward slap, hurling him twenty feet.

It was a nasty mess. The living dogs finally swung back to a great circle. Some lifted their heads and listened to the blowing horns in the distance. Mamook moved on. The circle broke, following her but keeping out of her reach. She watched the cubs. She watched every dog. She knew about this fighting business. She knew its many tricks.

She kept going, fighting every yard of the way, stopping here to fight the closing in circle, stopping there, the dead stringing out behind her. Once they were down in a bowl-shaped depression, with the dogs howling and baying all around them. Mamook took time to lick one of Polaklie's bleeding ears. She stood there as if worn-out by it all and resting for a minute. Her great paws were dropped. She was like some besieged mother standing still and straight with a protecting arm around a child at either side

of her. She looked up, and sniffed the air.

It was amazing that the dogs were such fools. Some of them did steal away from the fight and go to the calling horns, but the others kept on. They were fools enough to charge when Mamook and the cubs came out of the depression. One got close enough to sink his teeth in her rump. She only shook him off. It encouraged him. He shot in again, again bit the rump, again escaped. It was delightful. He shot in for the third bite. She caught him a rump-brushing smack, and tore off almost half the side of his head.

Yard after yard dragged on with Mamook and the cubs constantly on the defense. She came to the rim of the great table. Here a great cliff dropped away. Mamook found the place, and charged the dogs back. She went over the cliff then, the cubs first. No dog could follow her now. No man could follow her except on a rope, and the man was never born who would do that.

Down, down for three hundred feet. There was a brittle-lipped ledge, narrow and dangerous. No dog would risk it. No dog could. The cubs finally stopped before a low-mouthed cavern in the face of the cliff. Mamook pushed them aside. She squeezed in, investigating. The place, once inside, was a great yawning thing with many passages. Its old smell was familiar. Mamook inspected it all. She stopped at a little pool in the center of it, and slaked her thirst. Here at last was safety—safety from anything that walked, crawled or flew. She made a noise that called the cubs inside. They found the pool, quarreled a little over the water, and almost immediately afterward they were rolled into one fuzzy ball and asleep in a corner.

Mamook went back to the mouth of the den. In the distance she saw a string of men and hurrying horses. Between two of the horses something was riding on a stretcher-like thing. Behind the horses, tongues lolling, some of them limping badly, followed strings of the hateful dogs. Mamook licked her chops, scratched her rump, and sat down, well back in the mouth of the den. A great feeling of peace was settling over the mountains. Mamook sniffed the air. Pretty soon it was going to snow.

MOLO MOLLY'S PARKA

By H. H. MATTESON

HOH HOH STEVENS goes squandering into the Thunderbird Cannery store and the postmaster clerk hands out an amazing document. Hoh Hoh reads it and says how he's suspicious, seeing it come to the post office and not to Joe Albright, the commissioner, where it ought to.

"Maybe so," says this Willie Barnes, the postmaster, "but that is a terrible lot of money mentioned there."

Hoh Hoh reads it out:

"'Ten thousand dollars reward will be paid, and no questions asked, for the recovery and delivery intact into the possession of the undersigned the following described fur parka: Body of parka made of forty-five Kuskokwim squirrel skins, hemmed with otter, the hood faced with the long hair of the gray wolf, with twenty-eight ermine tails ornamenting the front. John Tremaine, Attorney, Yellow Dog, Alaska."

"It might be a crooked deal, Hoh Hoh, as you say," says this Willie. "I know of this Tremaine. He's the shysterest lawyer in the territory. But ten thousand is ten thousand. You know of any such parka, Hoh Hoh?"

"No, and I hain't apt to. This is the most hottest summer we had since I been north. They hain't no one capering

around in this swelter in such garb. Fetch a look at me. I hain't got on even socks or underwear, but just this thin cotton shirt and these frail navy, barn-door, dungaree pants without no belt or galluses. I aim to prance down the beach and go swimming."

"Keep an orb peeled anyway, Hoh Hoh. I and you could wax tumultuous on five thousand dollars apiece."

Hoh Hoh rounds a jut in the shore line, heading toward his swimming place, and there he's all ways amazed at what he seen. A terrible fat, middle-aged woman, barefoot, sweat rolling offen a round, red face, is coming toward Hoh Hoh, and spite of the hot weather she's got on a parka that, at a glance, Hoh Hoh estimates is constructed out of forty-five Kuskokwim squirrel skins, a gray wolf hood, and twenty-eight ermine tails dangling in front.

She's likely a hawser length from Hoh Hoh when out from behind a beach boulder a party pops, and he runs violent at the fat woman. He lays holt of the fur parka and makes vulgar efforts to snake the same up over her head, seeing how the only way you can get in or out of this kind of a parka is like crawling in or out of a barrel. This party yanks the parka up to the woman's knees, thereby revealing that likely she hain't got on no other clothes, and at ninety in the shade Hoh Hoh estimates she don't need none.

This party has the parka up to the woman's fat knees when she emits a mad squawk and she doubles a fat fist and she takes this sculpin abaft of the ear and knocks him kicking. He jumps up lively and is organizing to rush her again, and she's charging at him similar, when Hoh Hoh arrives and slaps this rude party to one side, just as the fat woman leaves go a kick at him so violent she capsizes herself over onto the beach.

The party just goes capering off frantic amongst the boulders and the larch bresh.

"I regret exceeding, madam," says Hoh Hoh, assisting the fat lady to her feet, "I didn't arrive up prompter to afford you better aid."

"Young man," she says, "I hain't required no aid."

"You-all will pardon curiosity on my part, lady," he says, "but hain't this unduly hot weather for to be wearing fur? When I seen that sculpin making efforts to disrobe you here on the beach I figured he might be one of them nudists seeking converts."

"No, no," she says, disgusted. "That camp-rat was aiming to steal my Kuskokwim parka."

"It is a terrible fine parka," says Hoh Hoh, looking at the woman sharp. "It's worth anyway a thousand dollars, and —maybe ten thousand."

"Ten thousand!" she says. "Why, if sentiments can be estimated, it's worth a million. It's worth so much this Horse Face Annie won't never get it, and I just know it was her hired this camp-rat to try and snatch it offen me."

Hoh Hoh regards the woman a minute.

"You all hain't sojourned amongst us long, have you, madam?"

"No, I come recent. And don't call me madam. Call me Molo Molly Draper. I hain't yet disgraced that title none, even if in Indian lingo *Molo* means plenty wild."

"Mrs. Draper," says Hoh Hoh, "I'm a United States marshal. If efforts is being made to snake your parka offen you, I offer my services for protection. If I'm to be of aid, I'd like to know where you roll your blankets."

"In that little *barabara* over the hill," she says pointing. "I hain't been here but a week. Likely you esteem me a lunatic, wearing this hot parka in this weather. I got to. Half a dozen times this Horse Face Annie has tried to steal it.

"Why, just last night I awakens. I sees a shadder. Some party is marauding in there, trying to take and steal my parka. I took after him, hurling bric-à-brac and implements as he went charging out the back door. I got to wear it constant, even if I melt down into a pool of solid fat."

For a whole minute she stands estimating at Hoh Hoh.

"You're a terrible strong young man, and they hain't a doubt," she says. "I don't know of but one man *skookumer,* and that is Tsolo Torkelson. That's a man, Tsolo is. Good as you be, young man, Tsolo would wad you up and carry you as a pocket piece. But I hain't got Tsolo to aid me no more. Never will have. No."

Again she studies Hoh Hoh.

"Seeing you're next best to Tsolo Torkelson, young man, come on with me to my *barabara.*"

They go tromping up the slope and into Molo Molly's shanty. They set down.

"Young man," she says, "If you'll stand by and see that this Horse Face Annie never gets a paw onto my million dollar parka, I'll give it to you. Sure. It hain't worth no million, except sentimental, but it is worth a thousand, cold, actual *pil chickamin.*"

"Mrs. Draper," says this Hoh Hoh serious, "you breaking out so frank and honest with me, I'll do similar. Your parka is worth ten thousand—anyway, a circular down to the post office says so. A lawyer, John Tremaine, of Yellow Dog, offers ten for it."

"John Tremaine!" Molo Molly kind of spits vindictive. "The crookedest camp rat in the north, and all ways fitten to be conniving with Horse Face Annie. If John Tremaine is after my parka I got to withdraw offers, young man. I'll keep my parka and I'll fight 'em till I fall down into my own tracks and bust. Sorry. Leave me, anyway, make offers of a cup of tea."

They set and swig tea.

"Just the same, Mrs. Draper," Hoh Hoh says, "without no reward, I still make offer of my service. It's a reproach to me, having sculpins trying to snake clothes offen women in public and marauding into their bedrooms."

Hoh Hoh raises up and says *"Klahowa,"* and goes on down the beach thinking deep. He's just got to admire Molo Molly for her *tumtum,* and he decides he'll help her, if he can.

HE goes to the store and organizes with some cheese and crackers and don't say nothing to Willie, who's in the post office part. Then he goes back, and from the far side, where she won't see him, he crawls into a pile of boulders and some bresh not over fifty yards from her *wickiup.*

Hoh Hoh has a terrible long wait. It's clost to morning, him laying plenty uncomfortable amongst the rocks, when he hears a soft tromp on the sand and raises up, and sees four shadows moving toward Molly's *barabara.*

Hoh Hoh crawls up onto a boulder, and by the sick moon he saw one of the four was a terrible tall, ga'nt woman.

They divide into two parties, the ga'nt woman and a man going to the west side of the house and the other two to the east.

Hoh Hoh hears a crash and a screech. He jumps offen his rock, hits running and goes surging into the back door, which is standing open.

From there he could look on into Molly's bedroom, and she's setting on the edge of the bed, wearing the parka for a night gown, and she's just lit a seal-oil lamp. The four skulking parties is standing by.

"Oh, so, Horse Face," says this Molly, plenty cold and defiant. "It's good for you that you fetch along plenty reinforcements. If you got the *tumtum,* you tell them to keep hands off, and I and

you will mingle personal. Come on, Horse Face, sling your bonnet on the floor, and come a-running."

But this Horse Face, while she's got the build of a skinny polar bear, she don't aim to fight Molo Molly. She speaks low to the others, and them three men jump and seize Molo, one of 'em by one of Molly's arms, the other two the other. Then Horse Face, she jumps in and tries to snake the parka up over Molly's head, seeing that is the only way Molly can get took out of it.

Them men hanging to Molly's arms, all spread out, Horse Face can't get the parka offen her. She speaks again, Horse Face does, and the men leave go their holts and grab Molly by the legs.

It's then that Hoh Hoh goes careening into the fray. The first *chukkin* he knocks two men loose of their leg holt. The other makes a jump, and Horse Face grabs onto Molly, and them being both terrible heavy women, they fall down onto the bed and it busts down onto the floor with a crash.

One of the men, when he seen and felt Hoh Hoh smashing away at 'em, he tries to run for it, and he mistakes a curtain hanging over some clothes for the door, and he lams into it and bounces back violent and hits the seal oil lamp offen the stand.

There they be, them six clawing and pawing frantic in the plumb dark.

Hoh Hoh, he clutches out into space. When he grabs out and fastens onto something he estimates is a male arm or leg, he lams away lively to where he figures this party's face is, or belly. When he grabs into soft meat, such is his fear of busting Molo Molly, he just shoves 'em away and claws for a fresh victim.

This here surging around in the dark is all ways uncertain. All at once, Hoh Hoh he discovers that some one has crawled up onto his back and is tearing like a wildcat at the back of his neck. He figures it might be Molo Molly by mistake, so he humps hisself sudden and spills this party offen him. She's got a holt onto the neckband of his shirt, and when he dumps her she fetches away this garment entire.

Then right away Hoh Hoh's legs is all entangled amongst other legs, and in the tangle he's trying to select out the males for to hit 'em, and everybody, seems like, is belting and tearing away at him. His face is running scratch blood, and some one, getting a holt of the buttoned waist of his sailor pants, is endeavoring to rassle him down. There is a terrible rip, and his pants is falling off, and he gets disgusted, and he seizes the pant band with one hand to hold it up, and he hain't got no gallantry no more. He swings the free hand vicious and mows down a space, and he hears folks crawling frantic on the floor and scuttering acrost the room and making frantic efforts to get to the back door. He follers on the jump, and in the better light of the outside he seen three men and a woman just tear animated down the beach, jump a skin-boat and paddle away furious.

HOH HOH goes back in, clinging to the pants band, and he sings out:

"Mrs. Draper, be you there? Are you hurt?"

"Here I be," she says from the bedroom. "I hain't hurt severe. Just scratched. You hurt any, Mister Stevens."

"No. Just clawed similar to you. They get your parka offen you?"

"Not by no means. I still got it onto me. Wait, Mister Stevens, while I find that oil lamp and light it."

"No, no," he says. "Don't light no light. I hain't got on no shirt and my pants is a mere fragment."

"You got some pants remaining, hain't you, Mister Stevens, that is feasible?"

"No, they hain't hardly," he says. "I aim to go surging out of here, run fast

as I can while it's still dark and break me out some new clothes."

"You'd never make it, Mister Stevens. When I lit my lamp, I seen what time it was. You know how it is here, North—sudden dark or sudden light. It'll be as broad as day in ten minutes. Wait. Seeing you got some pants, I got ideas."

Hoh Hoh, in just a minute, he feels something soft and fuzzy strike him in the face. He paws around and picks it up, and it's the million dollar parka.

"Seeing the way you performed, Mister Stevens," says Molo Molly, "I hain't no ways reluctant to trust you with my Kuskokwim parka. You climb into that parka. With what remnants of pants you got you can make it home, get into other garb and caper back here with my parka."

Hoh Hoh slides into the parka, and while it's terrible snug it will suffice, it and what pants he's got. He tells Molo Molly she can break out her light then, and she done it, and they both laugh hearty, at how they're both scratched and tore and how comical Hoh Hoh looks.

Molly she makes inquiry as to the actual state of them pants, the legs of which she could see, and she organizes Hoh Hoh with two safety pins, and he's ready to depart, but he pauses in the doorway.

"I'd like terrible well to know who them four adversaries was," he says.

"They was that shyster, John Tremaine, and two mangy coyotes he'd hired somewhere, and Horse Face Annie, who runs the lowest-lived dead-fall of a rotten roadhouse anywhere in the North."

"I see," says Hoh Hoh, though as yet he don't see scarcely nothing. "I'll be back prompt with the parka," he says, when he waits a minute and Molo Molly makes no further explanations.

Hoh Hoh starts out, prancing along lively, as it is plumb daylight, though early, and he don't want no one to see him in this ridiculous raiment.

He's just rounding a rock turn in the beach when a party raises up from behind the rock, and at the first glimpse Hoh Hoh estimates he must be seven foot tall and in beam according.

"Good morning, *tillicum*," the giant stranger says. "Where might you be hurrying to? And wherever did you get that parka of forty-five Kuskokwim squirrel skins and them twenty-eight ermine tails? Oh, I don't have to count them pelts none; I know."

"I got this parka loaned to me temporary, account of I am shy of clothes," says Hoh Hoh.

Hoh Hoh stands regarding the enormous stranger, who's got eyes like two round hunks of glacier ice and hands that's easy seven inches acrost the palm.

"This parka was loaned to me temporary," Hoh Hoh repeats.

"I estimate you're lying," says the big stranger. "Lookit that face and that eye, scratched and black. You took and grabbed this parka in violence. You can't lie to me none. You shuck it right off. I aim to obtain that parka here and now."

HOH HOH backs off. He hain't afraid of the giant party none. Hoh Hoh, down in his system, hain't afraid of no one that ever wore *mukluks*. But he don't like the look in the party's cold eye, and he regrets this parka fits so snug, and he sees battle intentions on this big man's countenance.

"You climb out of that parka," commands the giant. "Otherwise, I aim to assist you."

"I hain't cognizant of no gent in the territory that can shuck me out of this garment till I'm willing," says Hoh Hoh.

"Oh, you hain't," laughs the big party. "I'll shuck you out of it easy, like the peeling of a ripe bananner."

With that he reaches out a arm like

the beam of a steam dredge, and that terrible hand of his is the shovel, and he fastens into Hoh Hoh's shoulder and spins Hoh Hoh around like he was some sick child.

This frets Hoh Hoh terrible. He hain't used to be manhandled so rude. So he leaves go a *chukkin* that sinks clean to the otter cuff of the parka in the big sport's belly, who falls back amazed, wheezes hard, emits a bellow and charges away at Hoh Hoh again very emphatic.

He fastens. He slings Hoh Hoh beam end. He snatches him up. He hurls him again, Hoh Hoh taking up the fall by rolling.

Hoh Hoh is up plenty a-gile. He seen that, like most terrible big, strong men that hain't trained scientific, this party aims to subdue him down by main strength and wrassling.

But the giant fastens again. When Hoh Hoh twists away violent, he leaves most of the back of this million dollar parka in the *tillicum's* big fist. The party slings down the hank of fur he'd tore out and comes at Hoh Hoh violenter than ever.

From there Hoh Hoh fights skilful. Also he fights energetic. Every time the giant fastens, most times yanking out another hank of fur and some of Hoh Hoh's hide similar, Hoh Hoh he busts him in the jaw time and again.

It don't stop the big party none. Final, when Hoh Hoh's tongue is commencing to hang, he kind of raises up under one of the giant's rushes, and Hoh Hoh has got his arm straight stiff and a fist at the end of it, and he lodges this fist accurate under the big man's chin. Hoh Hoh goes on up with this fist, and the party's neck kind of cracks, and he careens over sideways onto the beach. He's Hoh Hoh's meat and they hain't a doubt.

The big fellow is breathing hard. But he opens them ice eyes final, and stares stupid at Hoh Hoh, like he's some one he never did see before.

Then he kind of cocks his head, and feels of his neck, and takes to staring at the hanks of fur out of the parka scattered all around.

"You done it," says Hoh Hoh. "You shucked that parka offen me, and they hain't a doubt."

"Yes," says the big man. "I done it. I esteem it a costly victory. I never was so tore and stove up before. You're the *skookumest* little man I ever encounters."

He sets up on the sand, and stares mournful at the hanks of tore-up fur.

"Now the combat is over, won't you reveal out how and where you got that parka?"

"Why," says Hoh Hoh, "you all can see I hain't got no shirt, nor no great shakes of pants. That parka was lent to me to get home in. A party I endeavored to assist, when four sculpins was trying to take this parka away from her, she lent it to me temporary."

"She!" exclaims the giant. "Who might 'she' be?"

"She says her title is Molo Molly Draper. She—"

"What! Where! Where is Tenas Molly Draper?"

He gets up and staggers to Hoh Hoh.

"I wouldn't scarcely address her none as '*tenas*'," says Hoh Hoh, who knows in the Indian lingo *tenas* means the little one. "No, Molo Molly is plenty sufficient as to beam and tonnage. She hain't no *tenas*."

"No more she hain't," agreed the giant. "But former. When we got acquainted over twenty year ago she didn't heft no more than a good pack of grub. Where is she?"

Hoh Hoh stabs with his thumb at where the roof of Molly's *barabara* shows.

"It can't be," says Hoh Hoh, "that I'm addressing and been fighting with Tsolo Torkelson."

"You be. I'm Tsolo Torkelson. How you know?"

"Molo Molly described you to me accurate and affectionate."

"Affectionate?" The big party's bruised face just glowed. Then he leaned over, groaning, picks up a lot of the hunks of tore fur, wadded them together.

"I just got to reveal some information, stranger," he says to Hoh Hoh. "Listen:

"TWENTY odd year ago, when I first went prospecting in Alaska, I boards a spell with Molo Molly. She'd been widdered when a young girl. We fell ardent. But I says I won't marry till I make a stake. I and Mealy Moore had been prospecting together. One time Mealy squanders off alone and come surging back and says he's struck it rich, and like *tillicums* was in them days, says how I'm in for half.

"We go stampeding back into the hills above Tanana. He had struck it. They was millions there. He was too sick. I packs him out. He dies. But with his last breath, not having kith or kin, he gives me the mine.

"In spring, I goes back in. I can't find that mine. I hunts for it twenty years, and can't find it. Moly Molly is all the time getting fatter. She says she'll make our living cooking, like she is doing, but I won't marry none. I'm proud.

"An idea crashes my brains final. It's no wonder I never finds my mine. When I seen it with Mealy, it was deep snow, and here I been hunting summers for it when everything looks different. So while it's terrible cold, I packs back in, me and three Klingkit Indians. I find my mine easy. I tunnel down and there where Mealy had drifted in was plenty thread gold. I'm a prosperous millionaire and they hain't a doubt.

"I trade them Indians gold for froze caribou meat and plenty fine furs. A *klootchman* come by on snowshoes, and she's going out. I writes a letter that I'm ready to marry to Tenas Molly, and I does up them fine furs, and I sends out furs and the letter by the Indian woman to Molly.

"This here Klingkit Indian woman was a plumb eediot. She didn't understand scarcely nothing. She don't deliver my love letter to 'My Darling Tenas,' like I'd wrote it, nor the furs. This numskull, she starts making them Kuskokwim squirrel and otter and them ermine tails into a parka. When half done, for to try it on, this eediot squaw, she takes the love letter proposing, and the parka for to try it on, to this Horse Face Annie, who ran a terrible tough roadhouse.

"My Molly, broke-hearted, figuring with prosperity I shucked her for Horse Face, she gets disgusted and mad besides, and she goes charging over and she takes this finished fine parka, and she lights out, Molly does, for parts unknown.

"Well, I don't know nothing of all this till in early spring, when I'm getting ready to go out to Molly with plenty gold. Then this camp-rat of a shyster lawyer, Tremaine, he come to my camp and asks me what I aim to do and what is my intentions toward Horse Face Annie.

"I tell him I hain't got no intentions of no kind toward Horse Face except to avoid her, account of she's a low character and sells liquor, which my Tenas Molly can't abide.

" 'Oh, so,' says this shyster. 'You sends Horse Face a terrible fine engagement present of a parka, and you writes her proposing marriage. You pingle up plenty *pil chickamin* or marry Horse Face, or we take you into court.'

"I hurls this shyster out of my camp. He goes off, muttering threats. You can see how they kind of had me. Figure, in court, Horse Face swearing I'd made

affections at her—and I did take a drink with her a few times—and she exhibits that parka engagement present and the love-proposing letter, which, while it's addressed to just 'My Darling Tenas,' could apply to her much as to Molly."

"I don't see yet," Hoh Hoh interrupts, "how your love letter got so side-tracked."

"Fetch a look at this here."

The giant party begins to unroll some of the hanks of tore-up hide out of the parka. He spreads the hank of squirrel hide. Hoh Hoh's eyes just bung when he regards the tanned flesh side of this squirrel.

"You see," says Tsolo, "I didn't have no paper, nor no ink, in my mine camp. I get some of that pigment color them Indians has, that never fades, and with a match stick I write this love-proposing letter on the back of that squirrel hide to my *tenas*.

"Sure, Horse Face seen the letter, after this eediot of a *kloochman* had sewed it into the half finished parka. She thinks what an effect it'll have in court, when she exhibits the engagement parka, then snakes it apart, and shows the juries the letter I'd wrote to her. Now you see why this shyster and Horse Face has been so anxious to get holt of this parka again.

"Molly know about the letter in the back of this parka? No, no. She couldn't. Molly was just hanging to it to keep it away from Horse Face, and for sentiment."

This Tsolo he set a minute regarding Hoh Hoh.

"*Tillicum,*" he says, "seeing how you're divested of shirt, and mostly pants, I'll lend you the loan of my tarpaulin coat. By clinging tight to what pants you got, and wearing my coat, you can make it home."

Hoh Hoh he puts on the giant party's coat.

"You wait there at the commissioner's office," Tsolo says to Hoh Hoh. "I'll want to see you again soon, and similar so will Tenas Molo Molly. You wait there."

With that, Tsolo Torkelson, the bundle of tore fur in his fist, goes hurrying up the hill toward Molo Molly's.

HOH HOH, all dressed anew, is setting in the office, and I be too, when in comes Tsolo and Molly. In a voice you could of heard him to Valdez, Tsolo demands the presence of Joe Albright, the commissioner, who is authorized to perform nuptials.

Joe he marries 'em. Then Tsolo h'ists a big poke out of a deep pocket and he pours Hoh Hoh a double handful of gold. Then him and Molly went careening down the dock, to wait for the packet boat to take 'em honeymooning to Juneau.

Hoh Hoh, he's absent then and disorderly for three-four days, and if it hain't he's the best deputy in the North Joe would of fired him, and they hain't a doubt.

HUROC THE AVENGER

By Gordon Young

CONCLUSION

(the story so far)

THE ex-galley slave who called himself Mister Herrack had escaped from one peril only to find a greater one. For, freed from captivity by the corsair, Sidi Hamet, because the latter needed a man to convey his daughter, Mariuma, to England, he found his little boat menaced by the dreaded *Maddalena,* a raider of the Piombo family of merchant princes. And Ripaudi, who captured her, was notoriously the most cruel sea hawk that prowled the Venetian coast.

Ripaudi's men boarded and scuttled the smaller ship and Herrack and his charge were taken prisoner. Mariuma saved her escort's life by convincing Ripaudi that her father would pay heavy ransom, and Herrack, because of his obvious mastery of seamanship, was made boatswain's mate.

Had Ripaudi known, the man Herrack was no ally of any Piombo. He had seen his sister sold into slavery by one of that family, and had been trailing them for years, a quest which his capture by Hamet had apparently closed forever.

Now, however, there seemed to be a way out, and a way which would not make him violate his mission to Sidi Hamet. Herrack incited the *Maddalena's* men to overpower a Spanish galleon, hoping to lead them to death. But perverse fortune still dogged his steps.

The mad attack succeeded—the Spaniard was at their mercy!

However much profit the rich booty brought to Venice, it boded no good to Herrack. Ripaudi, stung at being virtually shorn of power, plotted against Herrack's life, and Herrack foiled a murderous attack by sheer chance, just as the *Maddalena* was swinging in triumph into the port of Zara.

There, having escaped from the ship after having been thought dead, Herrack met Magda, who had taken Ripaudi from the shadow of the gibbet and made him a powerful sea captain. Furious at what she believed to be Ripaudi's infidelity with Mariuma, Magda summoned Herrack to a conference, in which she commanded him to kill his would-be murderer—a welcome command to Herrack.

Before the meeting broke up, however, hired bravos of the Piombos broke into the house, threatening to put an end to all plans. Herrack routed the assassins, capturing one, and forced him to reveal full details of the plot. And far from a simple revenge killing, as he had supposed, the affair began to take on monstrous size. For the bravo, a trusted henchman of the Piombos, had been instrumental in the capture of Herrack's sister, and, faced with death, he blurted out that she had not been killed, as had been first reported.

Before he could reveal the full story, however, Gratti, the captured bravo, was murdered as he lay prisoner in Magda's home. And, in any case, more urgent work lay ahead. For Grimani, the powerful rival of the Piombo family, had Mariuma in his power.

Confronted by Grimani, who had thrown Ripaudi into prison and who threatened to hang Herrack as a conquered enemy and pirate, Herrack took the one way out. He persuaded Grimani to let him undertake a raid into the country of the Uskobs, who had raised havoc with Venetian sea-mastery. And as ransom for the freedom of Mariuma, who was being held captive, he promised to bring back to Venice the head of Huroc, their leader—or die in the attempt!

CHAPTER XX

(CONTINUED)

QUELLA HAD been beaten and screamed at so much that day that when they went into the room she hovered near the door to mutter maledictions upon Ripaudi.

Magda's face was marked with tear stains, now dry. She had the careless untidiness of one roused from bed without having slept and pushed at her loose mass of black hair, not to put it into better order but to get the tangles from before her eyes.

She looked wearily at Herrack, put her hand on the couch beside her. "Come here." It was neither a command nor a request, merely instructive. Herrack sat down.

Quella's toothless muttering grew louder, more rapid, as if she were saying some ritualistic curse that must be hurried. Her withered, bony hand made the sign of the cross, but she was not praying. The cross was made backwards.

Magda looked at him with sad eyes. "You will do something for me?"

Quella shrieked from across the room, "No! No! Don't listen to her!" The meager witch-body came closer as if to pluck at Herrack.

"Out, you hag!" Magda cried in fury. Get out, or I—" Magda's teeth gleamed as she jumped up.

Quella backed off, still scolding, and went from the room.

Magda sat down as if she were very very tired. "Quella drives me mad." The words came in a low monotone. Magda seemed to have laid by cajolery, as if womanish tricks were too trifling for her present sincerity. "She cannot

understand. You cannot understand. I—I cannot understand. But I love Guido Ripaudi!"

"Last night you hated him. Or so you said."

Magda's voice rose. "I do hate him! I curse him! I know him and do not trust him!" A long weary sigh and again the monotone: "But also I love him."

Herrack leaned forward with elbows to knees, turned his face, stared at her. She had the rich, vivid beauty that often comes to women of fields and fishing villages, a beauty without delicacy and without the petulant weakness of artifice. Hers was a generous face that beggars greeted with a cheery laugh instead of a whine.

"I cannot let him stay in prison. They may put him to death. You will help me?"

Herrack straightened up, put a hand to his beard, plucked thoughtfully. "Help how?"

"To escape!" She laid both hands on his shoulder and leaned close, her breath on his cheek. "You will help? Please, please help me!"

Herrack spoke slowly. "And last night you asked me to kill him?"

"I was furious, hurt. I can't let him die. If he escapes he will go from Zara. I will never see him again. That will be the same as if he died, but I will have helped him to live. You will help me?"

"You? Aye! But Ripaudi? No!" Herrack spoke as calmly as if reading from a book. "He boarded my ship at sea, made me a prisoner. But that was the fortune of war, and well enough. Then we captured the galleon. I did as much as any man, more than most. In the moonlight I covered my one friend with a cloak and he, being mistaken for me, was pistoled. I did not think so then, but now I believe Ripaudi gave the Dutchman the pistol and urged him to use it. Yesterday evening, as our ship was near moorings, our friend Georgius tried to stab me in the back from shadows. You have the jewels Ripaudi paid him as a reward. So if ever we meet, I mean to kill Ripaudi!"

Magda sighed, nodded. Neither spoke for a while. She crossed her legs, locked her hands about a knee, gazed at the lion's paw carved at the bottom of the table before her. She spoke as if to herself, brooding:

"It is as Quella says, a madness, a curse, a thing in the blood. And Quella still has mass said for the soul of a man that long long ago beat and robbed her, and with her own money wooed another woman. That is why poor Quella is so enraged at me. She thinks I ought to be guided by her sufferings. True. I ought. But I am happiest when he says, 'I love you, Magda!' and kisses me. After that he is sure to ask for money. Oh, a woman loves because she cannot help herself—for who would willingly be a fool? Yet this one last time it may be that he has learned much, and if now I help him to escape—"

"How?"

Magda seemed to awaken. Her face brightened and she began to pull rings from her fingers. Her voice was eager. "With these the jailor can be bribed to admit a file and rope!" She was forcing the rings into Herrack's unresponsive palm. "Oh, Guido could have these, and more—so why should they not now be used for his need? You will do it for me?"

"Ho! Why, Magda, if he but crosses my sight I kill him!"

"Oh, he won't! No one shall see him. I will hide him until he can escape from Zara. And you will, won't you? Take these and—"

Herrack stared at her, took a full breath, smiled. "Here!" He offered back the jewels and when she drew her hands away he tossed them lightly at her. "I am too good a thief to need to steal from you. Take them. And I will do what can be done—easily."

Magda threw her arms about his neck.

AN HOUR later Jehan followed with a hand gripping Herrack's cloak as they marched through the dark street.

"And you say you will keep that fool's promise?" Jehan protested with anger.

"If, as I promised, it can be done—easily."

Jehan's words were jerky, for he stumbled much in trying to keep up with Herrack: "If you are telling the truth, which I doubt, then you are more fool than any man I ever knew! I have doubts about you. But if you do as you promised Magda, I shall have none. Why, he tried often and most foully to murder you—"

"Any man may that wishes! Let go my cloak and pull your nose if you must have something to hold by in the dark!"

"And you forgive him?"

"Ho! Forgive? Mark you, scamp. Ripaudi never claimed to be a friend. His hate was frank. And when a man has said, 'On guard!' he has the right to strike!"

"God hears me!" Jehan puffed, joggling to keep up with Herrack's long stride. "I have no hate of Captain Ripaudi. But I like you and curse myself in wondering why! And I love Magda. You owe her much kindness. If you would show her a favor, let Ripaudi stay behind prison stones."

"I know a way to do her a greater favor!"

"Why she ever loved him is a mystery to me! I tell you his greatest virtues are but swollen vices!"

Herrack laughed. "The bishop's scrivener will now preach a little."

"He is so vain he appears bold! He is so insolent he seems frank! He so hungers for honor that he would rather die than be thought a coward!"

"He is no coward," Herrack growled. "Say what else you like!"

"Then why did he hire Georgius to do what he might have done better for himself?"

"'Twas easier. 'Tis the fashion of lordlings to hire daggers and he would be a man of fashion!"

Jehan then knew that he was being laughed at. "Ho, then you won't help him?"

"I'll give you help!" Herrack, not liking the pull on his cloak by which the lad kept pace, caught Jehan by the arm and hustled him along.

They went to a tavern on a street back from the waterfront, where Herrack had taken a room upstairs with two beds. He pushed Jehan to a stool:

"Now, youngster, you've a great high opinion of your craft. And 'tis as evilly beyond your years as the Devil could wish for! But try tricks with me and I'll have your ears fed to a cat! Ask no questions and do not pry. I am, as you are never weary of saying, a fool. It shows most in my liking for you! When the time comes, you can have a choice of staying here in Zara or going away with me. Until then you do as I bid."

Jehan sat with wondering uplift of eyes. He was too wise a rogue not to recognize that he was being talked to for his own good. He listened with respect, his impudence much tamed.

"Now 'tis your work to make inquiry about this fat, wheezy Piombo. Find where he keeps himself and when he goes abroad. Learn where he visits, dines, and at what hours. Especially those after nightfall! You may please your curiosity, if you like, by learning how young Agnolo Piombo seeks his friend Gratti, but I have no care about that. Do as you are told and keep your mouth closed. If you do not believe there is wisdom in my warning, try some of your tricks and see how far hellward you go with a broken neck!"

Jehan felt of his neck, stared, grinned a little, said earnestly:

"I believe you would do it!"

CHAPTER XXI

COUNTER-PLOT

HERRACK WAS summoned privately to the palace and shown into the same closet. The same lean secretary went out with a stealthy air when Count Grimani came in.

Count Grimani said softly, hastily, "Word has just come to me that Andrea Piombo with two galleys and a ship is ready to sail for the *Quarnerolo!* You must leave at once, or our plan cannot succeed!"

"Old sailors of Zara tell me that it is not easy for galleys to find Uskobs, though merchant ships find it hard to escape them."

"But Piombo has Uscocchi pilots who will lead him through the islands to that village where they have their stronghold!"

"Piombo has bribed Uskobs?"

"Whether he has bribed or tortured the men into acquiescence can make little difference." Count Grimani leaned forward to make his words more forceful: "'And if the Magnificent succeeds, you fail!"

"That is true," said Herrack quietly.

"Your fishing boat is ready. Here is the pass to go and come. When do you go?"

"In two days. I have all the men engaged excepting one. I must have your permission for him."

"How is that?"

"He is a prisoner. Ripaudi."

"But why do you want him? You two are not friends!" said Count Grimani at once.

"We are not friends. But together we have succeeded well. He is a great swordsman."

"I will not release him!" Grimani waved a hand and turned away. "No. He is a man of the Piombos. They are saying that to injure them I am favoring the Spanish complaint." His voice rose, shook. "I hate the Piombos but I hate Spain more! If I released that Ripaudi the Piombos would say I did it out of fear of them! No! Never!"

"But if I go to the Uskobs with the captain of the pirates, will I not have a more ready welcome?"

"That may be, but I will not release him! Never!"

"If Ripaudi should escape from prison, could it then not be said 'twas by the connivance of the Piombos?"

Count Grimani frowned like a chessman who considers a subtle move:

"He must not know it was by my consent."

"None need know."

"How is that to be arranged?" Count Grimani did not need instruction, but appeared willing to hear and judge how well Herrack could scheme.

"Let Ripaudi be summoned for questioning. The guards will remain outside the door. Let him see a rope and file placed in a drawer, as if it had just been taken from another prisoner. Let it be arranged so that he is for a moment or two alone in the room. When he is returned to prison the rope and file will be concealed under his doublet. If it is a good file he will escape that same night!"

Count Grimani looked pleased, nodded with the smiling approval of a master. "I did not know there was so much craft in you. Let Huroc look to his head! And when he is free?"

"I know where he will go to be concealed."

"To Piombo the merchant?"

"Not at once."

"Your Ripaudi escapes tonight!"

"If so I sail tomorrow in the dawn with other fishermen!"

THE OLD French gunner was as full of zeal and exuberance as a boy going afield to steal apples when he dressed somewhat like a Zaratime fisherman, put on

a knitted cap with a tassel and took his company to the fishing boat. There were with him four or five of his gunner mates and Carlos, who muttered in an ugly mood, with as many curses for Spaniards as for Venetians. Black Pietro was aloofly calm. Pietro held fast to plain things, such as saints and crucifix, the drip of holy water, the rewarding favor of Great King God, who hated Turks. All of them were glad of the chance to leave Zara.

Herrack went to the fishing boat in the afternoon and looked about, gave instructions. He inspected the hold, where the odor was bad with a smell of fish and bilge, but said it suited well the coming need.

When Pietro asked somberly, "But what of our Lady Mariuma?" Herrack asked, "You love her, Peter?"

"As my life!"

Herrack put his finger to the thin chain about Pietro's neck, fingered the crucifix. "If you pray for her and do as I bid, now and later, it may be that some day soon you will again have the honor of guarding her door in many strange lands and foreign places!"

Shortly after dark Herrack took the gunner, Pietro and the grotesque Carlos ashore. They carried secreted daggers but were warned not to use them unless pressed.

They left the boat at a secluded place along the sea wall and went through the town until they came near a house well known in Zara. Herrack stationed them close by in shadows.

"We wait," he said. "Do not talk and do not move, no matter how long!"

He stood by them and there was a long wait. The old gunner squirmed much and ventured into whispering. Herrack spoke sharply. The gunner had the feeling that perhaps he did not know this man so very well, though he had thought them boon shipmates. He waggled his clipped head in silent mystification that Herrack could be so companionable at times and at other times as aloof and hard as a high officer in the king's service.

A twinkling flare of light came around a turn in the crooked street, then the muffled clack of shoes. The torch threw a dim glare over men that followed the link boy. One figure walked with the toiling lurch of a man much too fat to be at ease on an uneven street. He was accompanied by two serving men who wore swords in contempt of Zara's law and also carried cudgels.

Herrack let the link boy pass by, then without a word leaped out, flung his cloak tightly about the head of old Agnolo Piombo, bore him to the ground in a heavy fall that changed the bellowing outcry into a gasped grunt.

The link boy yelled, threw away his torch, fled. The serving men were knocked about and put to flight without having drawn a sword or swung a cudgel.

Even before a window was lifted and a head poked out from the upstairs of any of the neighboring houses, Pietro, Carlos and the gunner hoisted up Piombo and ran at a joggling, unsteady trot.

Twice they hurried around corners into side streets to avoid link lights; then they came stumbling around the buttressed angle of a stone house and ran up against a patrol of *custodi* who cried: "Stand! What men are you? And what are you about?"

Out came the *custodi* swords and they wore an air of righteous menace. The squat Carlos was ready to have a fight, but Herrack pushed him aside, and told him: "Choke that hamper of dirty laundry!" Piombo, muffled and half gagged, was trying to call out and beg for release.

Herrack stepped before the officer in charge, saluted him, without a word drew from under his arm the parchment, stamped with the Count of Zara's seal, that commanded all men to permit Eduardo Herrachi and companions to go and

come, on land and sea, without molestation.

The chief of the *custodi* read thoughtfully under the link light, gave back the paper and saluted. He said to his men, "This is an affair of state and none of our business!" To Herrack, "*Buona notte.*" The *custodi* went on with rapid steps, discreetly getting away from what appeared to be an affair that was taking place under the sanction of the governor.

The old gunner smacked his lips. "This is the man for me, this Monsieur Herrack! He knows how to arrange everything!"

Without other difficulties they returned to the mooring where the boat was tied.

Fat Piombo was tumbled in, kicked for squealing, warned to keep quiet, whatever his pain. The cloak was taken from about his head and handed up to Herrack, who remained ashore. He loosened the painter, tossed it; then the boat rowed off.

JEHAN was at a table near the door of the *Morte de' Turchi.* He wriggled nervously, watched the entrance, now and then furtively took from his pocket a folded paper that was heavily sealed. Jehan again and again inspected the seal which, with an artful craft learned in the bishop's employ, he had forced, then read the message and replaced the seal.

A buxom waitress with new ribbands in her bodice made a clatter and ogled the pretty youth. When he would not notice her she sniffed haughtily, uptilted her nose and marched off.

Herrack came in, slapped Jehan's shoulder in approval, sat beside him. " 'Tis done, well done! He came along the street and near the hour you said!"

Jehan drew out the sealed paper. "A Jew boy came to Magda's house and asked for you. I was there and took it from him." He watched Herrack's face closely, felt relieved as Herrack ripped the seal without glancing at it.

Herrack moved the candle, spread the paper, noted at once that it was addressed to no one and had no signature.

> My cousin of Ragusa has by chance this very day came to Zara. He tells me that it is impossible to deliver your message. My cousin himself has just received instructions about the final disposition of certain matters from your friend, who wrote that he was leaving the city of his adoption forever. The same letter from your friend to my cousin confirms what you told me about the shadow of misfortune upon the house of those who have prospered without honor, succeeded without courage. May God in His justice reward you.

Herrack read the letter twice, put an end of it to the candle, watched it burn. When the flame drew near his fingers he dropped the paper and let it burn on the floor.

He gave Jehan a queer look, smiled a little and slowly put one hand to the back of the youth's neck, squeezed, and held out the other hand, palm up.

"Well, rogue, must I break your neck and search your pocket?"

Jehan in trance-like mystification brought out a pouch and laid it in Herrack's palm. "But how could you know?"

"The letter, of course."

"There was no mention of jewels!"

"Oh!" said Herrack. "You break seals, do you?"

"No, never! Certainly not. The seal was loose, the paper unfolded and—"

"—and you are lying."

Herrack's good nature revived Jehan's impudence. " 'Tis only to instruct and tutor you in the deception of the world! There was no mention of the jewels the Jew boy gave with the letter, so how could you know?"

"Ho, now who is the fool? You, not to know that when a man is honest enough to say he cannot do as he was

paid to do, he must also be honest enough to return the price paid!"

They ordered a big supper. Herrack was cheerful at his eating and drank much light wine. He watched the rings on the big candle that told how many hours since sundown, and when it was well after midnight paid his reckoning and pulled the wine-drugged Jehan to his feet. The buxom waitress kissed both good-by.

Herrack put an arm half affectionately about the sleepy rascal and dragged him along. "We go to say *addio* to Donna Magda. I leave Zara in the dawn. And you, if you wish, go with me."

"I wish nothing of the kind," Jehan grumbled, "but nevertheless I shall go."

NEAR Magda's house they saw many people gathering and Herrack and Jehan in wonderment quickened their steps.

Torches were in link rings at the side of the entrance. The link rings were fastened in stone, so that torches might be set there to illumine the street at times of festivity. Many people were about and others were coming. Some were women in the disarray of hasty dressing with shawls over their heads; and a great number of men, mostly poor folk. The babble was like the low *shh-sush* of waves running over sand. Even those who were weeping kept their cries muffled.

Herrack pressed through to the door and was checked by a guard, but a voice spoke through the door grating. "Let him pass!" It was the chief of the patrol that Herrack had encountered earlier in the evening.

The door opened to Herrack and Jehan. The officer saluted Herrack, whom he thought a secret agent high in the confidence of Ser Filippo Grimani.

On the floor in the hall lay the body of Matteo. He had been run through the body by a sword and had been unarmed when killed.

"Then it is all true?" Herrack pointed first toward Matteo, then toward the street, where the babbling and clacking and sobbing of the people went on under the smoking flare of torches.

"True, *signior.* Ripaudi escaped from prison and came here, not an hour ago. A night guard detail has gone to the house of Piombo, where it is thought most likely the beast would hide himself. A search is also being made through the city. The poor people of Zara loved Donna Magda. They will tear him limb from limb."

Herrack set his jaws hard, as if himself fighting the pain of a deep wound. Jehan stared at him with reproachful, silent questioning.

"Ripaudi," said Herrack, "will not be at the house of Piombo. He knows 'tis where the first search will be made!"

"*Signior,* it was reported earlier this night that old Agnolo Piombo had been taken prisoner in the street by some people disguised as fishermen. His serving men and a link boy have said so."

Herrack gave him a direct look.

"A strange story, do you not think so?"

"Not a witness can be found to support it!" said the captain of *custodi.*

"Upstairs, she is?" Herrack asked.

"Upstairs, *signior,*" said the captain.

They found old Quella on her knees in Donna Magda's bedroom. She rocked to and fro, clasping and unclasping withered hands. Blood trickled from her own head and the thin gray hair was disheveled. She knelt in blood.

Magda lay on the floor in her richest gown of yellow satin and the sleeves and collar were foamy with lace, now blood-flecked. Her hands and throat were bare of jewels; even the buckle of her girdle was gone. She had been stabbed time and again. Her lips were parted and her dark eyes were wide open. There was no agony on her face, only a

kind of serene daze, as if she looked in wonderment at something so bright that it dazzled her open eyes.

The room had been pillaged. Drawers lay where they had been overturned to empty the contents for hasty rummaging.

Herrack growled as if his throat were in pain. Jehan looked down at Magda and bawled.

Quella peered back across her shoulder. With abstract gesture she put a hand to the gash on her temple, but took no notice of its bleeding. "Oh, Signior Herrack! She knows now that old Quella's warning was prophecy!"

Herrack's throat was so stuffed up with a guilty feeling that he could not speak. He nodded somberly.

The old woman wailed with distorted face, "Thank God on high that you did not give that fiendish beast help to do this crime!"

Jehan was on his knees, praying in Latin.

"It was when Magda said you had helped him to escape that the vile beast —it angered him murderously! He cursed till foam was on his beard. He swore she lied, and he struck her again and again and again! When I rushed in, he hit me with I know not what and I fell, only to awaken and wish that I were dead!"

Distraught Quella rocked forward, wailing.

Herrack pulled at Jehan's arm, raised him gently, with caressing arm about the youth led him away. Jehan, blinded with tears, stumbled and sobbed without shame.

CHAPTER XXII

"YOU!"

LONG before dawn the fishing boats of Zara began to stir, bright sails were shaken from their furling, the sound of voices came over the still black water as men heaved at anchors.

Herrack, sleepless, brooded. The face of Magda, with parted lips and open dazed eyes, seemed still before him. He watched his men moving like lumpy shadows as they hoisted up the yellow lateen sail.

The boat moved in drifting slowness and water whispered at the bow. The great low bulk of Ugliano Island lay before them. The wind freshened when they left the lee of Ugliano. In a dawn as radiantly lustrous as if the whole sky were a great half shell of a pearl oyster, Herrack looked along near the shore, where beautiful gardens nearly concealed the country places of Zara's nobility. Roman nobles had loitered in the shade of these gardens a thousand years before, when Zara was the city of Jadera.

They sailed on, past the fishing boats that had cast nets; where the merry shouts of fishermen were heard, they could see the glinting silver sparkle of the sea's living treasure, caught in nets.

The old gunner came up to Herrack, lifted his eyebrow in polite anxious inquiry: "But you go north!"

"North, gunner."

The gunner's anxiety was somewhat concealed under great politeness:

"But *monsieur,* the Uskobs?"

"Uskobs? Uskobs? Who are Uskobs?"

The gunner shrugged his shoulder. "*Monsieur* is pleased to make fun of me. Very well. I have learned that *monsieur* knows his business best and it is mine to do as he says. To the Uskobs or to the Devil, it is one with me if *monsieur* wishes!"

In the simmering heat of noon a galley raced out from under the shadow of one of the many small hilly islands thereabouts and made swiftly for the fishing boat, which was venturing farther up along the coast than fishing boats ever went except by stealth. Salt smugglers were bold fellows and often wore the guise of fishermen.

Herrack had sail trimmed and course set to meet the galley. As soon as that was done the galley's stroke became less rapid. When the galley was within easy voice call an officer cried, "What men are you? And where do you think you are going?"

"We are fishermen that seek such tunny as break other men's nets!"

That was an answer that did not please the officer, who swore much. The day was hot and he had been asleep on shore. "Salt smugglers and traders with pirates grow more impudent every day! I will come on board and see for myself!"

He came with armed men at his heels and expected to clap all on board into the hold. He put his nose in the air, for the smells were not pleasing. One glance showed him as ruffianly a lot of faces as he remembered ever to have seen.

Herrack guessed that an officer in command of a galley so near Zara must loyally belong to the faction of Grimani, else would not be in command; so he took the officer to one side, showed him the parchment and its seal.

"To a man," Herrack explained, "we are off the *Maddalena* and seem to flee the charge of piracy. As refugees, we expect to be made welcome among the Uskobs. When we have learned their secret places—is it not likely, Signior Captain, that the Count of Zara will then send you in command of the force to exterminate them!"

"May it happen before that dastardly Piombo has had success! 'Tis said he has sworn to bring Huroc himself between the columns for all Venice to see beheaded!"

"This Huroc, then, is as active as ever?"

" 'Tis true that for a year now they have not ventured to board any big ship far out at sea, but his name rings in our ears. These wild beasts appear on rocks and cry, 'Huroc! Huroc!' at us. If we land and search we find nothing. They vanish like shadows in sunlight!"

The officer then gave Herrack his blessings and some advice on how to avoid the other galleys that kept watch farther on. He said, "The fewer who know of your mission, the more likely it is to succeed." A suggestion for which Herrack expressed gratitude.

The afternoon wore on and all the while Herrack stood in the bow, aloof, silent, watchful as they passed often within a long stone's throw of islands where there was not a person or sign of habitation to be seen. Nevertheless, he knew the boat was watched by lynx-eyed men.

SHORTLY before sundown Herrack took out a broad, heavy razor and with much soap, cold water from the drinking jar, and no mirror, he shaved. The crew, some distance off, looked on in silent wonder that a man content to remain roughly bearded among the sweet, playful girls of Zara would so carefully freshen himself on a fishing boat.

They saw emerge from the tough tangle of red beard a face much younger than they had expected; but if the face was young and marked with features that indicated good birth, it also had even more the look of a hardened commander. Herrack's jaws were set; his eyes burned with a steady gleam; there was no trace at all of that amiable good nature which they had come to expect of him even in times of impending peril.

When he had shaved and washed himself carefully, combed and smoothed his hair with almost ritualistic concern, he put on the heavy cutlass. It was still very warm, but he shook out his cloak and drew it about his shoulders. He said:

"Bring Piombo on deck!"

Piombo came, sick and terrified. He blinked and stumbled.

The crew sensed that there was something deep and tragic in this meeting. The old gunner clucked and bent forward, hands to thighs. Carlos squatted cross-legged, moistened his thick lips, and grunted softly.

Piombo whined and brushed at his eyes with a fat hand. Fears had sucked the marrow from his bones and left him a quivering, man-shaped lump. His peering, blinking eyes began to clear in a focus on Herrack's face. Piombo drew in his breath, gasped, "No! It can't—Oh!" He hunched forward, muttered, "It can't be—no—" His voice broke, as he realized that what had seemed merely the specter evoked by troubled thoughts was certainly the man himself. *"You!"*

Piombo tottered in confused terror, fell to his knees, whimpering. He crawled as if to grasp Herrack's feet in abject pleading. A foot struck him in the face. Piombo struggled back to his knees and waggled his hands in aimless clutching. His very jaws seemed unhinged so that words would not take shape, though he was frantically trying to plead for mercy, to make promises, to make denials; and in his senseless desperation he offered money, any amount of money.

"Money? 'Tis all you and your accursed house think of! Money! Will it buy back the Lady Elizabeth, unmarked of suffering?"

"Oh I would, b-but she is d-dead! She—she killed herself! Oh, I begged Andrea not to do that thing, but he ordered it, and—"

"You lie. It tickled you Piombos to mock the anguish and perplexity of an English boy to whom you showed the gravestone of his sister! You grinned within your beards. You rolled your eyes and called him mad—would soon have clapped him in a madhouse and left him rot. He swore to wipe the Piombos from the earth!"

Piombo began an inarticulate, blurted pleading. Terror gave his face an idiot look, his voice an idiot's sound. He was begging to do a service, to offer a secret for mercy.

"Take your secret to hell. You will have none of me!"

Piombo blabbered:

"Ripaudi—I can tell—he has sworn to kill Grimani—then you—the Moor girl —" His words were disconnected, his mouth so stuffed with fear they scarcely had sound-shape, but he seemed to gather a little hope from Herrack's attentive silence. "If you will promise, I will tell—can tell—"

"Tell or no, you die and before that sun sets!"

All eyes swung westward. The lower edge of the great red sun had already begun to slip below the bobbling line of the sea. Carlos grunted, waggled his head, grunted. This was to his liking.

"B-but you do not k-know Ripaudi escaped from prison early last night! He is by now far on his way to Venice with my son Agnolo, who bribed the jailor to admit a silken ladder and file!"

Herrack very softly said, "Ah."

"He has gone to my nephew Andrea! He will return and assassinate Felippo Grimani in exchange for that Moor. He will kill you! In warning you, have I not won the right to mercy? Oh, have mercy!"

"It was," Herrack asked, "through your help, then, that he escaped last night?" The question was in so low and strange a tone that Carlos frowned with a dog-like bubble-growl in his throat, for it seemed that this man Herrack, whom he had come to love so much, might have some weakness.

"It was arranged so that he could have escaped two nights ago, but Agnolo did not have the boat in readiness at anchor outside of Zara until last night! Oh mercy, have mercy!"

"No mercy, Piombo! Your warning means less to me than the whistle of the

wind. But there has been more pleasure in this meeting than I had thought could be. Thank God, there is no stain of Magda's blood on my hands!"

Herrack threw off the cloak and put a hand to the cutlass, drew it slowly.

THEY came to anchor in the dusk among a group of islands known as the Fratelli. A lantern was hung from the bow, another scarcely above a man's head on deck.

Herrack chose Black Pietro, a dependable fellow, to have charge of the watch, warned him impressively before everybody to keep a wary lookout and at the first unusual sound of any kind to awaken Herrack.

An uneasy voice spoke respectfully. "But if the Uskobs come? We are few and they are devils!"

"They will come! And if you let them get on deck before we have the chance to make them understand that we are fellow devils, they will sweep our deck with their swords as a housewife sweeps sand from her doorstep!"

"But how may we talk to them? If what is said of them is but partly true, then they know no tongue, but growl and howl like beasts!"

"I go to sleep now and may dream of a way to talk with them." Herrack wrapped his cloak about him and with an arm for a pillow lay on the deck, was soon asleep.

No one else slept. The men who were not posted as lookouts huddled together. The old gunner scratched his clipped head, said, "Make no mistake, my friends. Our captain knows what he is about! Where he sets foot he will soon be the captain, and he is not one to forget friends. Besides, what can he do? Death, if he wants a man, can find him as easily in the crowds of Paris as here, where there is not a dozen of us!"

CARLOS growled and whetted his ax with a smooth stone.

Herrack was awakened by Jehan, who gasped, "Boats! We hear boats!"

Herrack went to the side, where other men strained their ears, listening. Through the silence, coming from afar, could be heard the soft thud of heavy oars rowing stealthily.

Herrack warned everybody to keep their hands empty, to stand quiet, show no fear. He made the grumbling Carlos pitch his silver-bright ax down the after hatchway.

Herrack had the lantern brought aft and hung at about the height of his head. He stood with its light on his face. He put his hands to his mouth and made a long-drawn shout. His voice brought echoes from the cliffs of the Fratelli.

Silence followed.

Herrack called again and began a strange, harsh speech, of which no man on deck understood a word.

They could hear the oars beat the water. There was now nothing stealthy in the stroke. A slim, low boat emerged hazily into the starlight and suddenly across the water came the shout: "Huroc! Huroc! Huroc!" It was a fierce, jubilant cry. The name echoed from the rocks of the Fratelli as from a multitude of tongues. The small galley came forward with rapid strokes like the rhythmic thud on wet drums, drove as if to ram and board the fisherman.

The rowers suddenly backed water, then heaved the heavy oars in board, ranking them one over the other. Herrack shouted something, as if approving this oarsmanship, and was answered gleefully from brazen throats. Two powerful figures swung their weight at the helm. The galley slanted its bow broadside. Figures began to leap from the galley to the fisherman, as if hurled by a blast of wind. They came with broad, naked swords in hands; many did not

have scabbards, but all had long curved knives at their waists.

They were tall, broad-chested, lean-waisted men with hair that fell to their shoulders, long mustaches and shaven faces that were as hard and dark as weather-worn bronze. Some wore broad metal armlets. Their eyes had an untamed fierceness.

They surged at Herrack, struggled about him with a force like anger. As they recognized that it was indeed he, whom they had thought dead, they set up a clamor as wildly jubilant as if they had stormed and taken the biggest ship out of Venice.

It was then that the men of the *Maddalena* knew they had been shipmates with Huroc the Uskob. Jehan grinned like a happy monkey, pleased that he had long been the friend of the greatest pirate in the Adriatic.

The Uskobs gave them a moment's fright with their overpowering welcome, seized and almost tossed them from hand to hand, put them into the small galley. Even Carlos' ax was fetched and given back to him. They were curious and amazed by Carlos himself, a squat giant. It was enough that Herrack said, "He fights like an Uskob!" Of Pietro, "He hates Turks!" Of the gunner, "We are friends!" Of Jehan, "I trust no man more—though any other man that trusts him will be putting his hands in fire!"

They set fire to the fishing boat and rowed away.

"*Tripesdieu!* Did I not tell you?" demanded the gunner as he prodded the sailor nearest him. "Wherever that captain of ours goes he is *the* captain!"

CHAPTER XXIII

"HUROC!"

USOCOCS, Uscocchi, Uskoks, or Uskobs meant merely "refugees;" and these refugees were Balkan mountaineers who had been harried by the horde of Turks until they made their last refuge among the wild, rocky islands of the Eastern Adriatic. They never ceased their warfare on Turks, who kept a special army in the mountains to check their raids; and when Venice made trade-treaties with the Turks, the Uskobs turned on her ships.

Austria, always at war with Turks, usually at war or wishful of war with Venice, encouraged the savage Uskobs, bought their loot, promised subsidies and protection. Turks by sea and land, the Venetians by sea, tried desperately to exterminate them.

In the end (1617), desperate Venice, unable to check the increasing strength and boldness of the Uskobs, made a treaty with Austria whereby Austria paternally gathered her unconquerable pirates together and coaxed them back into the interior of the Croatian mountains, where they forgot their seafaring and returned to the pastoral life of their forefathers; but their hatred of Turks endured among their children and children's children.

When Herrack came among them the Uskobs were merely savage prowlers among the ten thousand islands, pouncing on such small ships as blindly ventured or were blown near. He soon became their sea captain, led them beyond sight of land, attacked and captured even galleons that flew the banner of Venice. Men who could leap over rocks all night, fight all day, and who had a ferocious lack of fear made invincible boarders.

Herrack found that the mountaineers had brought into the islands their immemorial family feuds. He obliterated these by taking the young men of various families into his own company, bound them to him and to one another by the ritualistic and sacred blood-oath. Thus he had become as a son and brother in Uskob families and the blood-oath was quite as binding as birth.

His own company, as a reminder of

their blood-kinship, first used "Huroc!" —as they miscalled his name—for a battle cry. Soon his fame was known throughout the Adriatic and Mediterranean. When the Uskobs thought he was dead his memory took on a legendary significance. "Huroc!" became the call to arms. It rang in the ears of inland Turks; it pursued fleeing Venetian merchantmen.

Venice, humiliated in pride, greatly injured in purse, continually increased the reward on his head.

AFTER some three hours of rowing, the Uskobs, all the while chanting a wild song by which they kept a rowers' rhythm, came to the beach before a small village of rude houses. Even the babies awakened and toddled out to the fire that was built in the open.

The lance-straight women and girls were intensely curious about the men that Herrack had brought with him, especially about Carlos. They called Jehan "child." The old gunner, being a Frenchman, was soon a favorite and brown, naked Uskob babies crawled over his legs.

The women had a hawklike boldness in their eyes. They were daughters and grand-daughters of women who, when their men had died with swords in hand and they were surrounded on all sides by Turks, had sung a jubilant death chant and, hand in hand as at a festival, leaped from a cliff.

Their lonely, dangerous life was brightened by the brightest colors on embroidered vests and dresses. They went decked in scarlet and yellow and always looked gay. They were fearless, therefore cheerful. They wore much jewelry, but scorned the dainty rings and pins their brothers and husbands took from Venetians. The gold was melted and shaped into something of suitable weight for an Uskob woman. They had nearly every virtue excepting mercy.

Jehan complained because though he knew three or four languages, now he might as well keep still. "I can't speak a word they understand and I never saw such beautiful girls!"

"Or," said Herrack, "such ready fathers and brothers with a knife. Be thankful the Lord has loved you enough to keep you in ignorance of how to lie to these maidens!"

The next day Herrack and his companions were taken to the village which was the nearest that the Uskobs had to a stronghold among the islands. It had grown into a numerous settlement, because it was difficult for galleys to find, and the rocky channels were dangerous if they did find it. The island was covered with herds of wild goats. There was much wood suitable for boats. Tall peaks looked seaward, where keen-eyed watchers could discover ships from afar. There was a large cave most suitable to store loot. The cave had probably been known to pirates for a thousand years, or longer. Strange coins and ornaments and pieces of armor were still to be found in its recesses.

Herrack was greeted with fanatical welcome. He went into the house of a stern-faced old man who numbered Herrack among his many sons. He put on dark red woolen trousers, bound a sash about his waist, pushed a long curved knife with gold-tip sheath into the sash. Broad armlets were fastened on his muscular arms. He buckled on a broad-blade, sharp and bright, double-edged, and so heavy the average man would have needed both hands to use it.

When he came from the house cheers rattled among the rocky, wooded hills. He was again their sea captain.

Herrack held council among the elders and the younger men were sent far and wide to summon Uskobs scattered among the islands. They came with wives and children, all their earthly pos-

session, in long, shallow boats. When pursued, they concealed their boats by capsizing them in shallows and getting on shore among the rocky woodlands. They had swords, knives, bows and arrows, even crossbows; but bows were used mostly for hunting. They chose to fight with their breath on the face of foemen.

ONE morning a sinewy youth came bounding down from rock to rock as sure-footed as a goat. He raced into the village and cried that Venetians had come. In the dawn, from the heights where he and companions watched, two galleys and a great ship had been seen.

Then it seemed as if indeed Piombo had Uskob pilots.

Herrack said, "I had thought it easier to make wolves into lapdogs than persuade an Uskob to pilot a Venetian."

The village hummed and stirred like a hive of angered bees. There was running and shouting, clink and clank of gear, rattle and thump of oars as men made boats ready. Women hovered about, watched with lingering looks, but cried joyful encouragement as boat after boat put out to sea.

Herrack put all the men of the *Maddalena,* excepting Jehan, on a boat under the command of a wily old Uskob who understood precisely what Herrack, with great patience, was going to try to do.

"You, my friends," Herrack told them, "before today's sun sets will see much fighting."

The old gunner turned his eye from boat to boat and shook his head. "I thought it madness when you drove the *Maddalena* against the galleon of Spain. If you send these skiffs against two galleys and a round ship of Venice—not even devils fight such odds!"

"No, nor archangels! They wore armor—or so church painters show. Uskobs fight bare-breasted!"

Jehan was made to stain his body with berry juice and come along half naked with Herrack.

"If you, my fine rascal, are brave enough to be much wounded, Uskob girls will love you!'

"I am no such fool about women as all that!"

Before the Venetian fleet lay a great splatter of islands known as the Dragon's Bones. It was as though God, on the day of creation, having finished with His mountains, had dumped here the leftover rocks. Some lay snag-toothed and barely awash at low tide; others towered ruggedly, and many lay asprawl, a mile long, with arched crests where only the hardiest vegetation found root-hold.

No sailing ship could venture into that treacherous maze, though heavily armed galleys had cautiously prowled through the wider channels, seeking Uskob pirates. It was well known that Uskobs usually kept out of sight, hid themselves impenetrably, unless meaning to attack; and when they attacked it was with the directness and ferocity of wild boars.

A fleet of some twenty to thirty boats of all sizes had rowed from the village in helter-skelter array; but only eight or ten appeared at sea between the coming Venetians and the maze of rocks where they could readily withdraw and escape. At a far sight of the Uskob boats the galleys lowered and furled their lateen sails, put over oars.

Venice, on land and sea, made much use of mercenaries. In each galley were some three hundred rowers, five and six to each oar. They were *buonevoglie,* adventurers of many races, freemen, not slaves. They had arms and in a hand-to-hand struggle—all fights with Uskobs were hand to hand—would rise from the benches, take arms and join in the battle. On each galley was also crowded another hundred armed men in helmets and cuirasses, with pikes, swords, and firearms. Cannon pointed from the bow. Such dense crowding was of the

highest value in boarding when other galleys and ships came together. It was useless against Uskobs, who simply abandoned their own boats and boarded. Once any number of them got on board they might be killed, they were never beaten off.

ANDREA PIOMBO, called the Magnificent because of his fine dress, wasteful extravagance, his largess to the rabble, stood on the poop of his ship. He was delighted. The Piombo luck was holding. Other punitive admirals had often not been able to find so much as one Uskob boat.

On his deck, chained near a brazier in which was a red-tipped rod of iron, were two Uskobs who had been captured some time before. Piombo had tortured them and would continue to torture them until they revealed the whereabouts of the Uskob stronghold. Piombo had come in such force that the village could be destroyed, much loot recovered, men, women, and children hunted down and killed.

Piombo hoped that this little fleet of Uskobs would attack, but not even he expected them to be that mad. Their boats kept so far apart, so near the shelter of the rocky islets that they could dodge away before the rush of the galleys. The Venetians waited. There was a chance, if the Uskobs were permitted to row about as they pleased, to venture nearer and nearer with their insults and gestures, that many of them might get within distance to be struck at the same time.

The wily galley captains gave orders that they were not to be fired upon by cannon or harquebusier, but the galleymen might shout what insults and jeers they liked; so there was great cursing and giving of dares.

One boat moved in a wide circle, as if in bravado to row clear around the Venetians. It was watched but left alone, so that others might be encouraged to follow or do something equally hazardous.

The boat passed the two galleys at the extreme range of the harquebusiers and moved up closer, toward the stern of the ship. The stern ports were closed and did not open. It seemed well to encourage the Uskobs in any imprudence. The boat came nearer and nearer.

"That," said Herrack, pointing to a figure among those who watched from the taffrail, "is Piombo the Magnificent."

Jehan clutched Harrack's arm, swore evilly. "And by him, Ripaudi!"

"So 'tis! A good sign. Be sure of it, rascal, God had not put him there without wanting his throat cut!"

"These galleys and that ship—you cannot dare attack! Not even with your whole fleet?"

"Uskobs dare anything. I have to seem ten times braver than I am or they would put me in skirts. They would attack and carry them outright, right out here. But the Uskob dead would be too much to pay. If I can't separate these Venetians, why then Piombo can carry his head back to Venice! I'll go after him and take it from him on some dark canal. Have it I will, and God knows it—so now He might as well give it to me without much more ado!"

Harrack called the attention of his men to figures that hung at the taffrail and watched this lone, venturesome boat come up close behind the ship. Few Venetians ever had a chance to see Uskobs so close without also having a sword flash at their heads.

"Go closer," said Herrack. "And mark them well. The man in the bright breast plate is one. Another is the man with black beard and hooked nose. When we capture this ship, for that one time, there must be prisoners taken—if I haven't already met them in the fight. Those two men belong to me!" He gave Jehan a push. "Turn aside and hide that rascal face of yours. Ripaudi may know

it." He called to the helmsmen: "Watch those stern ports. If they are raised, be quick!"

The pointing and staring of the Uskobs exasperated Ripaudi. He snatched a brace of pistols from his sash, leaned afar, snapped both. Smoke puffed with the dull *plop-plop* as when blown bladders burst. One ball went wide, the other struck the boat's bow near where Herrack stood.

Herrack's voice, answering the shots, rang like an echo of thunder:

"The curse of Magda is upon your head!"

Ripaudi's head snapped back as if not words but blows had struck his ears. The pistols dropped from his hands. He staggered, moved his hands with fluttering jerks. Piombo steadied him and peered with twitch of amazed glances from Ripaudi's face toward the naked, powerful Uskob chief who had signaled and shouted.

On one side rowers lurched forward, backing water; on the other they rose to their toes and fell back, heaving hard. The boat spun under the sweep of the helmsmen. Defiance and challenge burst from the Uskob rowers as they swept their long oars. "Huroc! Huroc!"

Vaguely, as if from afar, came a faint shout like an echo:

"Huroc! Huroc!"

It was from the poop of the ship, where a sudden commotion started. Piombo faced forward in an attitude of startled surprise. There was a clamor of hurried, vague cries, a bobbing lurch of men in confusion. Whatever was happening on the deck was too far in board to be seen from the boat; but soon there was a grappling huddle of men near the rail, wild struggling, out-cries, the shout "Huroc!" as only an Uskob could sound it.

Two men in chains and chained together knocked down with flailing manacles those about them and broke through. With one impulse both plunged headlong over the rail, tumbled through the air, sank instantly and were not seen again.

CHAPTER XXIV

GALLEYS OF VENICE

THE Venetians grew more and more weary of tedious inaction under the hot sun. The galley decks were overcrowded. There was no shade for the rowers, no shelter at all except close quarters on the poop for officers. The Uskobs could not be snared incautiously under galley bows.

The galley captains went on board the ship for conversation with the Magnificent, whose temper had grown evil with the suicidal loss of his pilots. If he did not catch and shatter this little fleet of Uskobs his luck in the *Quarnerolo* would be no better than that of other men before him.

On Herrack's small galley—if so small a craft could bear so big a name—Jehan squirmed about, trying to find a shadow for his sunburned back. He winced and swore, and the best he could do was wriggle to keep in whatever shadow Herrack's broad body cast.

"When I am again on land among Christians, I'll turn saint! If a little sunshine burns like this, I'd best dread hell! What's gained by this rowing about or lying still? My belly's empty and I don't like water that comes from a goat's hide!"

"The Venetians are sweating, too. Many wear armor. They've no place to lie and rest on galleys. Can scarcely squat. Soon they'll be wearily sick of waiting for us to play the fool. Anything they do will be more to our advantage than the way they lie now. When they give chase to ease their cramped muscles, open your eyes!"

"And if they don't?"

"Then your Magnificent Piombo must

return to Venice, where 'twill be known he found Uskobs and would not fight them! He'd rather die the death I'll give him than face that shame!"

The captains had returned to their galleys. Soon the galleys began a light dip of oars. With as much an air of drifting as possible they began to move nearer. The ship continued to stand off. It did not dare come closer to the Dragon's Bones under sail.

The galleys' maneuver was noticed at once. Herrack shouted, with no appearance of giving orders. His boats gradually drew together, remained close, and men set up a quarrelsome yelling. Bows and sterns bumped, oars struck oars, swords were flourished toward Herrack. It looked as if they were in riotous anger over something or other and were not paying attention to the slow drifting dip of galley oars.

The Uskob fleet lay in a disorderly huddle not far from the mouth of a long channel; for all of its twists and turns, it was wide enough for a galley to pass easily. The galley captains had been among these rocks before, searched for Uskobs, seldom found them, but had learned this channel.

If they could get their great galleys into position to charge rapidly, they might succeed in running down these boats, where they lay in a disorderly clamor. If the charge was made from both sides, the Uskobs would almost certainly be herded in confusion into the channel's mouth, through which a galley could pursue at full speed.

Suddenly the buglers that lay just above the captains' heads on the top of the poop shelter sounded. The bow cannon began to fire. The harquebusiers shot, though their aim was no better than when women throw rocks. Pipes whined shrilly and orders roared. The galley rowers swung their oars with great heaves, eager for the chase, and the stroke quickened rapidly.

The Uskobs yelled, spun their boats about. Some with furious chopping strokes darted this way, some another way, as if trying to escape through other passages than by the long channel. The galleys were bearing down rapidly from both sides. Muskets spattered little balls, bow cannon big ones.

The Uskobs fled, but not in a confused huddle. Somehow they got straightened out in an uncrowded line. Their skill at the long oars was astonishing; more astonishing was the coolness with which one boat, amid the hail-like splatter of balls and wild yelling of rowers, would wait for another boat to go ahead.

The galleys raced for the channel. It was not wide enough for two abreast. One that had a lion carved on its bow drew slowly ahead. The other, with much cursing fore and aft and on the oar banks, slacked the stroke to prevent a collision, and so fell behind.

The galley with the lion drove ahead with terrific surge. The bugle gave the stroke signal, the loud half cry, half grunt of the rowers came in unison. The oars pulsated in rhythmic sweep to the bugle's cry.

The Uskob boats were strung out ahead, rowing furiously. Those who were not at the oars seemed so madly excited that the Venetians were elated to think that the excitement was terror. The galley not only held its distance but seemed to gain a little on the last boat.

On that last boat was one figure that showed no more excitement than if made out of wood. He was the broad, half-naked red-haired Uskob chief. Drawn sword in hand, he stood farther aft than even the helmsmen. He faced the galley with a steady look, did not glance forward.

The galleymen could not hear, did not know, that Herrack was calling the stroke, timing it to keep the distance

that he judged would make the galley keep up the chase, yet be beyond effective range of the musketmen. They were more dangerous than galley gunners, who were seldom ever called upon to fire more than once before a fight became hand-to-hand.

The galley oarsmen heaved with all their weight, five and six to the oar. Their faces were twisted in the sweat-covered grimaces of torturous labor. On they went, far up the rock-ribbed channel. They were gaining. Soldiers cried heartenmgly. The bugler blew as if to burst his lungs.

A shadow crossed the galley bow with ominous, grinding sound—and the sky seemed to fall!

Uskobs had labored through the day to balance rocks that would tip easily. Rocks came tumbling and crashing like a landslide, threw water in blinding sheets, shattered the larboard bank of oars, struck down clusters of men, crashed on the deck. If the galley had been but a little nearer shoreward it would have been smashed like a nutshell under a heel.

With larboard oars shattered, the galley swung violently, struck the stern against the side of the channel, and the crowd of men on the deck was knocked into a confused heap, many falling overboard.

The second galley, not three lengths behind, saw the disaster, but could not swerve aside in the narrow channel and could not check its speed enough to keep the ram from crashing into the side of its galley mate, splintering oars, tearing timbers, knocking more men overboard. A tumult of throats rose in panic.

The sky rained Uskobs. They boarded from the rocks in far jumps as if hurled and seemed to need no footing. Their swords struck, even while their feet were in the air. When their feet touched anything they kept their balance. Their voices were a blast of sound. A whirlwind of steel swept the deck and the dead piled up before them.

They went over the wrecked galley as a hot wind swirls loose grain, drove the shattered galleymen in confusion over the sides and stern, rushed like wolves among sheep on to the second galley.

These galleymen were not sheep, but the Uskobs were more than wolves. Officers screamed at rowers to back away; but the rowers had leaped from benches, snatched at arms, joined the dense crowd on bow and walk and stern.

The Uskobs leaped from the wrecked galley, climbed out of the water on oars. They swam astern and scrambled up with bewildering agility. They jumped from the wrecked galley to the shore, ran up rocks and leaped feet first. They appeared on every side with a sword in one hand, a long crooked knife in the other. Uskobs fought as if they wanted to be killed. Men in armor were awkwardly helpless in the press. Men with pikes found the pikes too long to strike at men from an arm's length. Men with pistols could not point at an Uskob without pointing also at a shipmate, so thickly were the decks crowded—harquebusiers used their ponderous guns for clubs.

It was hand-to-hand death dealing, but the ferocity of the mountain pirates, their agility, their utter contempt for wounds or death, made galleymen who were as brave as galleymen anywhere feel they fought with devils. Venetian were crowded off their footing by sheer hurling weight, knocked among the benches, tripped in rising by the bodies of their own dead. Soldiers and sailors jumped blindly overboard, drowned or swam through the black water to the sea-slimed rocks, crawled up, hid.

The Uskobs swarmed with purposeful fury over the galley, went down into the compartments of the shallow hold, slew whom they found, threw wounded and dead overboard.

HERRACK moved among them grimly, pushed men aside. "Why do you cheer? What have you done? Wrecked a galley with rocks—as women could! A great ship of Venice lies out there—uncaptured! Clear this galley, so we can get it turned about and go to sea. You have done nothing to be proud of—yet!"

Jehan's jaws were still locked wide open from the amazement of what he had watched. He trembled to see Herrack shove Uskobs who brandished weapons. They obeyed, not cowed. Their fierce eyes flashed and they snarled in their strange hard tongue that seemed all "g"s and "z"s. Discipline still was their most difficult lesson, but they long ago had found that Herrack at sea was as ferocious as any Uskob. He was fit to command them. After a victory they were hard to control, snarled at orders, but obeyed.

They were proudly lazy at all work that did not have to do with fighting, and they wanted to caper and yell rather than clear and clean the galley, scatter white sand from the galley lockers, make ready for another fight at once. But soon it began to tickle their humor to fight the ship of Venice in a galley of Venice and they replaced oars that had been broken in the second galley and scrambled to seat themselves at the benches.

The French gunner was still rubbing his lone eye and blowing out his cheeks in amazement when Herrack told him to make ready the bow guns.

"Double-charge these guns and—"

"They may blow up!"

"If so, 'twill be close under the ship's counter and damage her as much as us!"

"God has ears, but never before heard such madness!"

"Now mark this, Master Gunner. Fire these guns only when we are so close that you can spit against the wind and hit the ship! Then there will be no balls drop into the water. No shots go wide. That is how the Renegado of Tripoli fights his galleys and he loses as few prizes at sea as any man!"

The galley was towed and rowed stern-on until it reached a wide part of the channel, when it was turned about. Herrack clapped a bugle in Jehan's hand, set him on the poop, and Jehan blew the galley stroke.

Herrack went up and down the walk like a boatswain over chained slaves. He had no whip but he had a tongue. If not held down fiercely in their excitement after victory, they would be careless, argue and quarrel, blame others for bad rowing, lose tempers and rhythm, splash about.

It was late in the afternoon when the galley was turned and headed up the channel, out to sea. Deepening shadows lay on the water. Night was coming.

The ship had been bearing too close to the dreaded Bones of the Dragon, so Piombo's sailing master put over boats, towed the ship about—that was easier than trying to go about under sail—and stood off for sea room.

Piombo was in an ugly mood. He had no anxiety about the galleys but no expectation that they had overtaken the Uskobs. Those devils, if hotly pressed, would sink their boats, scramble ashore, disappear. It was easier to catch fleas in the dark than Uskobs among these islands. Piombo swore at favorite companions, blamed them for letting the chained Uskobs escape.

It being late in the day and he nervously athirst, Piombo called for a melon. A half melon was brought to him on a gold platter by a servant, placed on a little table before a chair. Piombo sat down, tasted the melon with finical daintiness, threw it overboard. It was, he said, unripe. He made much to do over the hard melon, called up his steward, upbraided him, demanded another.

The steward had been long in Piombo's service and swore to a mistake, said many melons had been cut, that the

flunkey had picked up one meant to be discarded. Another half was fetched by the steward himself. Piombo tasted it with abstract look, studying the flavor as if he sipped wine in a merchant's cellar, pronounced it excellent. It was the other half of the same melon.

Before the melon was eaten lookouts cried almost in one voice:

"The galleys are coming!"

A scrambling rush filled rigging and bulwarks. Piombo rose, peered. One galley could be dimly seen in the distance as it emerged from the channel. Behind it was the black background of rocks that lay like a dark fogbank. The galley was rowing fast.

"It brings you good news," Ripaudi said. He had been broodingly silent nearly all day.

Piombo's favorites took the cue, began to congratulate him. Why else would the galley be rowing so fast that the oar blades stirred white water? Piombo was suddenly in a good humor.

Muffled cries of "Boats! Uscocchi boats!" rose from lookouts, were caught and echoed by sailors in the rigging, taken up and repeated by men on the high forecastle, mumbled with stupefied lips by Piombo's favorites:

"Boats!"—" . . . Uscocchi boats!"—"God in heaven, they pursue our galley and . . . "—" . . . *then the other has been captured!*"

The whir of uneasiness grew to clamorous alarm. Uskob boats were coming out from the shadow of black rocks and a great galley of Venice fled before them.

Piombo cried at the old sailing master, "Make sail! Get out to sea! When a galley flees no ship is safe!"

Orders rang. Men jumped in hurried activity, though many grumbled at flight. Piombo cursed the galley captains. He had told them to charge the Uskobs, to follow, run them down. The fools, he said, had let themselves be drawn into a trap. He had given command, he said, that they were not to follow in among the rocks.

Companions who had heard Piombo give orders to follow the Uskobs into the channel did not contradict him.

One voice only pled with him to stop this flight.

"Go toward them!" urged Ripaudi. "Meet them! Fight!"

Piombo said, "Let us count their numbers first!"

Ripaudi plucked at his beard, bit on his fingers. A sickness of heart lay deep within him. He had spoken of Magda to no one. Shame, after the maniacal rage that made him murder her, had distressed him. He remembered her kindness, her generosity, her utter devotion. Here in the wilds of the Croatian islands, an Uskob chief had warningly taunted him with her name. Ripaudi's superstitious blood played tricks with his imaginings.

The ship fled with frightened flaps of great loose-bellied sails. All faces were turned toward the galley. It was racing as if many of its oarsmen had been wounded. The strokes lacked the perfect sweep of the hardily trained *buonvoglie.* It was making straight for the shelter of the ship's guns, or seemed so; but the Uskob boats were gaining.

Piombo stared with fixed expectancy, trying to find other Uskob boats. Others there must be somewhere, since here were only eight or ten and a galley of Venice fled before them. That just could not be. Something was wrong. He spoke of it fretfully to his companions. Only ten boats at most and the galley fled!

Ripaudi snarled under his breath, "Why reproach the galley? This ship flees from the same few boats!"

"Hush! In God's name don't let him hear you say that!" urged a young officer.

"Attack! Attack! There is no way to win but by attack!" Ripaudi fumed.

A keen-eyed sailor, high aloft, gave an

awed cry: "As God lives. Uskobs—Uskobs man that galley!"

Now that they knew what to look for, every one could identify the crowd on the distant galley's bow as naked Uskobs. Terror ran in quivering chills up and down each man's back. Never before had Uskobs even attacked a Venetian galley! There was great hasty clatter of armor and arms.

"Make more sail!" Piombo shouted at the sailing master.

"My lord," said the bowlegged old seaman, "all sail that can breathe is set!"

"But they are gaining!"

"They have no knowledge of firearms," the old seaman suggested, diffidently offering a way of courage to Piombo. "Our cannon can beat them off!"

One of Piombo's pretty favorites murmured uneasily, "But it will soon be dark. If they surround us and board in the dark—"

"Hang out the battle lanterns!" cried Ripaudi and flung a hand aloft. His advice was very much in the tone of giving an order.

Many spoke in excitement and some said 'twere better to show no lights at all and possibly evade the Uskobs in the dark.

Ripaudi cried out, "God never yet gave victory to cowards!"

Piombo, used to flattery, curled his lips, sneered, "Cowards? I saw you tremble like a sick girl with chills when that Uskob chief spoke a woman's name! You would have fallen but I steadied you! What of your Mistress Magda and why has she cursed you?"

Ripaudi stared evilly for a moment; then, with slim fingers brushing at his eyes, turned aside, shuddered.

The iron cages of the cresset flares were lighted and swung aloft with much care, to keep their leaping flames from ropes and sails. The stern cannon roared. The far splatter of white water in the gathering gloom showed that their balls fell wide of the galley. Flame leaped from the guns; smoke swirled up, came on board the high poop. Piombo coughed against the lace on his wrist.

NIGHT came. The great ship of Venice fled through the dark. The Venetian sailors, poor untitled folk, were heartsick with shame. They were ranked, arms in hand, at the low waist bulwarks and high on the forecastle. They who had sailed with Filippo Grimani straight against the odds of Turkish galleys now fled. At times in the long history of Venice her sea-captains were over-timid, lacked courage; her sailors, never!

The battle cressets flared and roared, cast a fiery glow over the ship and nearby water. Bright fierce-burning flames dazzled men's eyes. They could not see clearly for any distance, but this man or that cried out that a boat was almost abreast. All was nervous confusion and false alarm. The Uskobs were, for them, strangely silent.

Startled cries yipped up from the throats of the fine gentlemen on the poop. There was a hurried thrust of faces over the stern. The galley had flashed into the light of the cressets. It came up off the starboard counter, where least expected. Boarders could not come up under the great overhang of the stern.

The galley swept up out of the shadows at the very angle from which the fewest cannon of the ship could be brought to bear. The cannon blazed anyhow, but all muzzles were too elevated for such a near target. The galley came on as scathless as a salamander among flames. The red-haired Uskob chief stood quite alone, except for a half-naked, long-haired bugler. The Uskob's face was up-lifted, as if searching the faces high above the poop's rail.

Piombo cried, "Fire! Fire at them!" Men drew pistols and snapped. Bullets

splattered over the galley deck, struck some men. The oarsmen heaved with strokes that made the galley dart like an arrow from the bend of the bow. The Uskob chief shouted, lifted his sword. Instantly a galley bow gun fired, then another, still another! The ship's timbers trembled from the shock of doubly-charged guns. Men high in the main fighting top felt the jar.

The Uskob chief turned to the bugler and he, waiting with horn to mouth, blew a long blast. The galleymen backed water, swerved aside, and under the hasty, haphazard fire of muskets, pistols, cannon, drew off into the darkness.

The galley's cannon, doubly-charged, depressed to the lowest range, had struck at the water line. The ship was perilously aleak.

The old sailing master swore.

"God give us help! Where did Uskobs learn that trick? The wolves will hang off till we are so waterlogged the slowest of their boats can come up and board with the others!"

Carpenters rushed below and labored desperately. Thick timbers had been shattered between wind and water. The sea gushed through.

Boats flashed up out of the darkness into cresset flares and as they came into the light the Uskobs began yelling. They were answered desperately with shouts, the fire of small arms, the blast of cannon. Uskobs were hit, a boat was shattered and sank—but the swimmers came on toward the ship.

The galley came again swiftly out of the darkness, rammed amidships. A shower of hooked grapples flew up into the ship's rigging. A shower of grenades flew down among the scrambling pirates. It was like stirring a nest of wild bees. All was tumult and upward surge of fierce, naked men. On every side was the jar of smaller boats striking the ship's side. As they struck the Uskobs left the boats as if thrown from a catapult. They climbed up bare smooth timbers as if they climbed ladders, it seemed; and they cried, "Huroc! Huroc! Huroc!"

Foremost among the boarders was the bare-breasted, red-haired Uskob chief. His great two-edged sword swung with down-chopping sweep and backward, slanting slash. If a man was too near when the sword was off balance, the Uskob chief struck with short links of chain carried in his left hand. At his heels was a squat, grinning monster with an ax, and with them a tall, dark man who wore earrings and a crucifix on his naked breast.

THE ship heeled with deserted helm, swayed under thunderous flaps of loose-bellied canvas, rolled aback with decks teetering men into a struggling jostle. The canvas flapped within reach of cresset flares, took fire, blazed and set tarred cordage burning.

Ripaudi put his falcon face almost against the bloodless cheek of Piombo. "Why do you stand here? The fight is there!" He pointed with the gleaming sword of greenish steel, greatest trophy of all his sea-plundering.

"But the ship burns!" Piombo stared overhead at the smoky flames of sails and riggings. Melted tar, adrip and aflame, was shaken down about the heads of men. "The ship burns!" Piombo screamed. "We will roast! We will drown! We cannot escape! What can we do?"

"Fight!" Ripaudi shrieked. He stepped back, threw up his head. "God punish me! Men have called you coward and I have killed them for it! Pah!" For an instant it looked as if he were about to run Piombo through, but he whirled on the cluster of silken, be-laced favorites, mocked them with, "Gentlemen and nobles!" Laughed, "Cowards!" He glared, hopeful some man would make a quarrel.

Ripaudi ran down from the poop, pressed into the crowd, gave orders for men to let him by, got into the front and fought. He met an Uskob's rush with a thrust that took the man in the throat. Ripaudi cried, "On! On! They are but men! Strike them and they die!"

Men were heartened to be so led. He was a great swordsman, dexterous and swift, utterly without fear.

The deck was lighted by a fierce heat. The fiery ends of parted cordage swayed about like long snakes that writhed in dangling, and when they touched flesh burned as sharply as snakes bite.

The red Uskob chief burst through the press of men, came face to face with Ripaudi. In dizzied astonishment he recognized Carlos and Black Pietro, cried quickly, "How can this be?"—then knew the beardless Herrack.

"*You!*" screamed Ripaudi.

"Not alone! Dead Magda is with me!"

Herrack slashed left-handedly with swirling chain to clear men back, his own as well as others, and the Uskobs knew this man for Huroc's vengeance alone.

Ripaudi, cat-quick, knew a chance when it came. He leaped forward while Herrack's chain was still a-swing, slapped a foot to the blood-smeared deck, thrust back his left arm with propulsive jerk, lurched far forward over a bended knee, drove a lance-like thrust that reached for Herrack's heart. The point struck high, entered Herrack's shoulder, glided deep, passed through. A full hand's length of jewel-bright steel came out of his back.

Herrack instantly struck with swirling chop of heavy sword, jeered as the sword swished:

"Woman stabber!"

Ripaudi's backward jerk was to pull the sword free, but his right arm was gone from his body. Herrack's heavy two-edged sword had cut flesh and bone at the shoulder as clean as a pruning knife shears a twig. Ripaudi's severed out-stretched arm, for the merest shadow of an instant, seemed to poise rigidly, straight out from the sword's hilt. The hand unclosed and the arm fell with a red splatter at Herrack's feet.

The sword was through his shoulder and dangled hilt-down, swayed with floppy trembling, as Herrack struck again.

USKOBS were screaming in triumphant fury. Ship's men were routed into panic. Swords lashed like whips. The Uskobs crowded on in blood-smeared ranks. Their arms grew weary. Men jumped from the ship, jumped down ladders, fled. It was massacre under the flare of burning top-hamper. The foremast burned like a great torch.

High on the poop a crowd of fierce men shut in Piombo with menacing circle. All his companion favorites were dead or dying; but he had a kind of weak, fear-struck hope that he, so great a man, was to be held for ransom. He had been roughly seized, shoved about protectively by fierce men who kept other fierce men from killing him. He talked to them in rapid, shrill Italian and was no more understood than if he were a mute and made sounds. The Uskobs cried loudly for "Huroc! Huroc!"

Herrack heard, knew what they wanted, but duty more important than taking off a worthless head kept him running here and there. His left arm was useless, dangled as if broken. He cursed and with his right arm jerked, struck and shoved men. The pirates swarmed about in frantic glee, plundering with scorched fingers. Their silhouettes had the fantastic shape of coal-black devils leaping about flames. The forecastle was burning, and the flaming foreyard fell with a crash, scattering embers. Uskobs yelled as if it were a spectacle.

Herrack drew his sword, struck with the flat of the blade, looked as if about to use the edge, roared orders to cut the grapples, get into the galley, get her astern and keep flames out of her. Men ran to toss loot over the side. They spilled much into the water, then sprang overboard into the galley, cut ropes, thumped the ship's side with oars, shoving off.

Herrack's left arm was as useless and as much in the way as something tied to his shoulder. He told a man to poke the hand down inside the sash about his waist. That kept it from flopping about.

He carried the broad bladed sword point-up and ran aft, strode across the poop. Men stepped back and Herrack came before Andrea Piombo the Magnificent.

"Name your ransom, Uskob!" Piombo shouted quickly. "Name your ransom!" His fingers twitched the foamy lace at his waist. "No matter what," he shrieked, "it will be paid!"

"Ho, so? You swear it?"

"I swear it!"

"On your honor?"

"On the honor of Piombo the Magnificent!"

"'Tis of little value, Piombo," Herrack growled. "But pay it you will or lose your head!"

"Though it were half Venice, Uskob!"

"Merely a slave girl, Piombo!"

"Slave—girl?"

"Aye! The living, unharmed, unshamed body of Elizabeth Herrack Dorrien!"

Piombo's eyes jumped, his body stiffened. His jaw quivered but he could not speak. There was no breath in his body. Fear held him as a terrier's teeth hold a dying rat and shook him till his teeth chattered.

"I am Huroc the Uskob. Also Edward Herrack! You thought me dead, forgot even my name long ago."

The stricken man gasped in a quavering voice, "A-any p-price!"

"Your head!"

"M-my head?"

"Aye and now!"

As he said it, Herrack's sword swayed up to the full reach of his arm. Piombo screamed. The sword gleamed through the firelight, swished down, struck a slanting sidelong blow.

There was a flame-colored spurt as the head of Piombo bounced on the deck, tumbled like a melon. A sinewy arm reached out, fingers gripped the scented curls. The head of Piombo the Magnificent was held high in the blaze of the burning ship by the arm of a screaming Uskob.

CHAPTER XXV

THE HEAD OF HUROC

A GALLEY of Venice moved stealthily through darkness toward the distant firefly of light where Zara lay.

Uskob oarsmen had lungs of brass but they were accustomed to silent movements in their mountain raids. They stood, five men to the oar, swaying to and fro with easy rocking motions and murmured in hushed tones one to another. A low note of the bugle timed the strokes. There was gurgling stir of water under the long blades.

Herrack stood by the helmsmen. His left arm was bound tightly to his breast with a crimson sash. Uskob women were marvelously adept in healing wounds; his swollen shoulder had been plastered with bruised herbs.

By Herrack was a wizened old Zara-time sailor with tiny black eyes and withering wrinkles. The galley had overhauled a salt smuggler. With no threats, but with the courtesy of one enemy of Venice to another, Herrack had borrowed the salter's pilot, made a ren-

dezvous, promised to return him on the morrow. Now the old pilot kept a hand to his heavy pouch, as if to ease his girdle of its weight. The belly of the pouch had been so stuffed with gold pieces that the mouth would scarcely close under the drawstrings.

"Make no mistake, Luigi."

"Ah, Master! For thirty years in blind-dark nights I have sailed this coast. We Zaratimes know the very whisper of the water." Old Luigi crossed himself. "I do not willingly show Uscocchi the way through darkness to my birth-town. But I will place tall candles before Saint Simeon, who understands all things!" He put both hands to the swollen pouch.

"We are men of peace this night. Or hope to be. But if the city is astir, your Saint Simeon may be rudely shaken in his coffin by clash of swords."

The galley entered the Canal di Zara and no longer rowed stealthily, but went with bold stroke, passed merchant ships at anchor and, near the shore, the moored fishing boats that drowsed sleepily on the tide.

Zara lay in the dark hush between midnight and dawn. There were no roisterers ashore from ships long at sea. Honest men were abed; the other sort, if abroad, prowled unseen. Wine shops were closed and bolts drawn. The city lay in shadows under starlight.

Carlos had as much swathing about him as a baby wears, but expected a fight and was willing. Black Pietro wore a rapt look of brooding gloominess. Neither knew why Herrack brought him ashore, left the gunner and his men on the galley.

On shore Herrack told them, "We have come for Mariuma—"

Carlos made eager guttural sounds, pricked up his ears. Peter's teeth gleamed wide.

"—and with the help of God—you'll need His help for she is all devil!—you two will watch over her from here to England. There are too many thieves on water, so we go by land. Through Austria, Germany, France."

The Uskobs who had rowed Herrack ashore at once gathered many fishermen's rowboats, took them to the galley and the boats returned filled with men.

A party of *custodi,* cloaks swinging, came at a jog trot over the quay cobbles. They were curious, eager for news, had no thought of alarm.

They lurched forward under an upheld link, drew back fearfully, turned and found themselves encircled by fierce men.

"No harm," said Herrack, standing near the light. "Which of you is captain of the watch?"

Some of the *custodi* had seen Herrack before, but he recognized none of them.

"He is the captain." An arm pointed.

"I am captain," the man admitted, not eagerly.

"How, with the least disturbance, is it possible to get word to the Count of Zara?" Herrack asked.

"I do not know." The captain looked about uneasily.

"Then make a careful guess, my friend. Careful, because you will be hostage against failure of the plan you suggest. I want a message straight to Count Grimani. How best to get it there?"

"Who are these men?" asked the captain.

"Uskobs! That is Piombo's galley. I would reach the governor without making a clamor that will rouse the town. But by the breath of God, we can, and will, sack the town, if need be!"

The captain was filled with a readiness to talk. There was, he said, a sentry at the door of the palace; a watch of ten men or twelve in the guard room; an officer of the household in a closet nearby. The sentry would call his ser-

geant; the sergeant would go to the officer; the officer, if it seemed important, would arouse the secretary; the secretary, if he thought himself justified, would then awaken the Count.

"Aye, and by that time all the servants, soldiers, maids, women, all the beggars, wineshop keepers, fishermen, would be flocking into the square and go squawking and squalling in terror. Soldiers would come from yonder fort. I know a better way. You come with me!" Herrack took hold of the captain's shoulder. "You others stand quiet where you are put. These men of mine will think no more of taking off your heads than of nibbling ripe grapes!"

Uskobs hustled the *custodi* near the quay wall, disarmed them, jeered at the toy swords and pin-pricking daggers, splashed the weapons into the water.

Herrack gave the link to Jehan, pushed him ahead, and said to the captain: "For the ease of your conscience and to encourage good will, let me swear that our purpose is peaceful. But if you try to convey a warning—more words are needless to a man of your understanding! Now come along and do as told."

A sentry with a long pike stood before the open doorway of the wide stairs. When he saw men coming he roused himself attentively but, recognizing the captain of the watch, waited. He could dimly see more men following some thirty paces behind and wondered but was not alarmed. The doorway was lighted by a lantern on each side of the wall.

The captain, instructed in his part, asked, "What officer has the palace guard tonight?"

"Signior Torricelli—"

The flat of Carlos' ax struck the sentry over the head from behind. Herrack snatched out and caught the falling pike. The sentry slumped down as if in drunken sleep.

INSIDE the wide hall a lamp with three snouts, all lighted, hung from the ceiling.

The Uskobs moved soundlessly behind Herrack, holding weapons carefully. Jehan held the torch as high up as he could reach to add to the light.

Herrack and the captain of the watch went ahead into the guardroom, where every man was wrapped in a cloak and sprawled on a bench or lay with elbows spread on the table, his head on his arms. Swords in scabbards hung on pegs. Scattered playing cards, broken crusts and picked fish bones told of games and supper before the men fell to drowsing.

They were aroused by a gripping shake on neck or shoulder, opened sleep-blurred eyes to see knives at their throats, heard a deep, cool voice repeating, "Keep quiet and you won't be hurt! Quiet!"

Fierce men hissed guttural whispers into the soldiers' ears, waggled the crooked knife blades before their eyes. Some soldiers crossed themselves and muttered hastily to saints they had not thought of since the last battle.

The unconscious sentry was brought in from the doorway and laid on the floor.

"Now for Signior Torricelli. We make progress!" Herrack, greatly good-humored, gripped Jehan's nape, thrust him along.

"Don't trouble me!" said Jehan. "As the only Christian of this galley crew, I am busy with prayers! If we escape, praise me!"

Herrack crossed the bare stone floor to the carved door of the room officers used when on guard duty. The door was pushed open and under the light of the torch Herrack presented a sword's point to the beruffled young man who, gape-mouthed, sat up with a start.

Signior Torricelli's eyes were big as oysters. Zara was a peaceful city, the palace guard a mere routine of duty.

Now fierce, half-naked men crowded in with naked weapons. This big man with the sword had a look that made the young officer's pulse rise and he caught his breath.

"What means this?" gasped Signior Torricelli. His pink boyish cheeks were white as bleached linen.

"That were I Count of Zara," Herrack told him, suddenly smiling, "I'd hang you for a laggard watch! Being merely an Uskob chief, I thank you for the laxity!" Herrack one-handedly shoved his sword into its scabbard.

"Mother of God, *Uskobs?* Uscocchi!"

"Up, up! Put on your boots, your sword. Straighten your locks. Sleeping has left them askew. Now set on your hat. Perk up the feather. Look alert. Come along. There's a sentry, I hear, at the top of the hall stairs. From the foot of those stairs, you call him down. If he runs and yells, you'll at once await burial!"

"Mother of God! You will massacre—"

"No one, if the sentry comes down as bid. If not, then we massacre Signior Torricelli and the pretty ladies of Zara will curse me. Come!"

Young Signior Torricelli breathed hard; his eyes nervously jumped at Pietro, at Carlos all wrapped in blood-sooked bandages, at the fierce, dark faces about him.

"What does this mean?" he begged.

"Come, lad. A good officer obeys only, and you ask questions! You pant, too, as if running. That will not do. A good officer always feigns bravery, even when frightened. I know, having fooled my men often! Come!"

Herrack laid his hand, not heavily, on the young man's shoulder.

A stairway with stone columns before it led to the household quarters and was gloomily lighted by a smoking lamp hung from the ceiling.

Signior Torricelli, with Herrack's hand on his arm and Herrack's instructive whisper in his ear, called from the bottom of the stairs:

"Sentry!"

"Sir!"

"Come down at once. The sergeant is drunk. I must place a good man in charge of the watch!"

The sentry on his hurried way down saw Herrack beside Signior Torricelli, but could not see the other men behind the column and along the wall. He stepped from the stairs, gave a start as Pietro appeared and threw a dismayed, accusing glance at the officer as Pietro clapped a hand to his mouth, seized his arms, roughly pushed him into the hands of other men, who hustled him off to the guard room.

"Up!" said Herrack almost genially.

Signior Torricelli started up, stopped. "On your honor will you swear—?"

"Bah!" said Herrack, pushing. "Were I so lacking in honor as to murder a man in his bed, would I not readily swear falsely on Bible, cross and eucharist? March!"

They went quickly up the stairs with Jehan close behind. He had put out his torch, discarded it and taken a lighted lantern.

In the upper hall Herrack posted men every few steps with whispered instructions to seize anyone who appeared, to smother all alarm and make no noise.

Signior Torricelli tapped nervously on a door.

"Who is there?" a womanish voice called with sleepy fretfulness in the tone of one often aroused over trifles.

"Torricelli! Word has come of Piombo's fleet. A great disaster!"

"Ah? Ho! Piombo! I am coming!"

The door opened. The long, lean secretary, all frowsy with bed-lying, had thrown a cloak about his shoulders and held a candlestick. One look and he jumped back, dropped the candle, tried to close the door, started to shriek.

Herrack's shoulder bumped against the door, flinging it wide, and his hand

closed on the secretary's throat, choked the outcry, made the secretary's head bob to and fro like a tassel on a wind-blown cap.

"When you grasp a clerk you hold a snake!" said Herrack, turning him over to Pietro. "Not so, Jehan? Light candles from your lantern."

The hungry secretary gazed down his long nose at the men about him and shivered. His scrawny legs were hairy and the cloak did not cover them. He heard:

"You will take me to the room where Count Grimani sleeps. You will knock. You will say, 'Your Excellency, Edward Herrack has returned from the north. He is here now in this room by me. He has that for which you sent him! Also he has news of Piombo's fleet!' If you say one word more or less I will kill you."

The secretary wet his lips, nodded, ran a thin hand over his half bald head, sighed deeply.

Herrack took him by the shoulder, pulled him into the hall. Silent men were grouped every few paces. Their forms were barely discernible in the dimness.

"Would play a trick, Master Secretary? These are Uskobs! One cry of alarm and they will storm through this palace as they stormed the ship of Piombo! You, Signior Torricelli, remain here."

Young Signior Toricelli gasped, tried to say something, thought better of it, sat down in a high backed chair, put his hands to his face and bent forward as if weeping silently.

THE secretary was given a candle to carry. His hand trembled and the light danced, made shadows jump and flicker. Jehan carried the lantern because Herrack was too forethoughtful not to arrange against the sudden darkness of a doused candle.

They went into the large room where Count Grimani in privacy received friends. The richest of Florentine velvets were on the wall, deep brilliant carpets from Turkey on the floor; massive carved chairs with stamped leather and gilded nail heads, broad tables and much glittering plate about the room.

The bedroom was reached through an alcove closed by double doors.

The secretary knocked with timid lightness, as though he wished not to be heard. Herrack reached over the scrawny shoulder and rapped hard.

Count Grimani was startled from sound sleep by the bold knocking, called out in an apprehensive voice.

"Y—Your Excellency—" The secretary cleared his throat, wet his lips. Herrack prodded him. "Your Excellency, Edward Herrack has returned from the north. He is here now in this room by me. He has that for which you sent him. Also he has news of Piombo's fleet!"

"What news? What news? Speak up!" Grimani shouted as he stirred hurriedly. The secretary opened his mouth, Herrack drew back his fist. The mouth closed.

The doors were pushed wide, clattered back. Count Grimani came through, settling the long cloak about his shoulders. "What news, Marco?"

The secretary stepped back, huddled his shoulders. He was afraid of Herrack.

Count Grimani looked past the secretary and for a moment did not recognize Herrack's beardless face. "Ah! I would not have known you! Wounded? You look like an Uskob! What news of Piombo? And you have—*it?*"

"I dressed as the Uskobs dressed and fought among them!"

"And you have brought me—*it?*"

"Aye! I have brought you the head of Huroc!"

"Good! Oh, very good!" Count Grimani bent forward with anxious look. "What of Piombo's fleet?" Then, Herrack not answering at once, the Count said, "Go, Marco."

The secretary gathered the robe tightly about his thin legs, shuffled across the room, stopped as Herrack said, "Wait. May not Mariuma be sent for?"

Count Grimani began in a tone of objection, "But our business—"

"Will be completed in ten words! I have returned to Zara for one reason only. And must see her!"

"Marco, awaken the *signorina's* maid. Instruct her to have the *signorina* come at once."

"Dressed for travel!" said Herrack. "Jehan, go along. Reassure her that it is indeed I who—"

"Marco! No man goes into the women's quarters!" Grimani drew himself up, glanced ill-favoredly at the youthful Jehan, frowned at Herrack's overweening assurance.

Jehan opened the door, not wide and followed the secretary, closed the door quickly. Before the door clicked to, Count Grimani demanded, "What of Piombo?"

"Dead! His fleet destroyed!"

Count Grimani drew back, jerked his hands as if from hot iron. "You—you say—*what?*"

"Aye, destroyed, utterly!"

Count Grimani's eyes grew blank in a fixed stare. He slowly took hold of his beard, muttered. "Fleet—destroyed—Venice's fleet destroyed—"

"Your enemy is dead."

"Enemy? I hated him and fought him, despised him as a man. But I would have served under him as a foot soldier, as a galley oarsman, against the enemies of Venice! Destroyed? How destroyed? Two great galleys and a ship? How could that be?"

"The galleys pursued the Uskobs into a channel where a great heap of rocks had been prepared to topple. They then chased and boarded Piombo's ship. No man survived."

"Huroc?"

"Led them."

"But you, you have killed him?"

"I did not kill him, but I have brought his head!"

Count Grimani ran his fingers far back through his hair, shook his head as if to clear his eyes. "Then you must have fought among the Uskobs?"

"How else win their confidence?"

"True, true," he muttered and stared at the floor. He walked two paces forward, turned, came back. "You have his head? Actually his head?"

"In all due time I'll show it to you."

"What? You speak so to me! Mere cut-purse bravo, you! Mark you," Grimani thundered, "I did not send you to fight Venice!"

Herrack rattled the sword, not drawing it. Grimani was no coward. "Draw if you dare, bravo!"

Herrack laughed. The laugh was free-throated, rang with merriment:

"Grimani, I know your cunning! You never intended to release the daughter of Sidi Hamet. Though I brought what you wanted, as a reward you would make me prisoner, soon gibbeted to quiet my tongue! But you hope to show the head of Huroc on a pike and seem to have avenged the death of your great enemy, Piombo! Well, Grimani, here is the head of Huroc! Take it off these shoulders and put it on a pike if you can!"

"You? *You*—Huroc? You mock me? You can't be! You are mad! Or is this some bold trick to—" Grimani shouted, "The guard! Ho, the guard!" and strode toward the door.

The door was thrown open before him. Mariuma stood there. Her tawny eyes glowed with eager look at Herrack.

Close behind her was Carlos, all agrin, and Black Pietro; behind them a press of tall bronzed Uskobs. Grimani gasped, staggered back like one who by unexpected incantation has summoned devils. He steadied himself with hand to table, drew himself up, straightened his shoulders, expected death but said nothing.

The Count of Zara did not know how to beg.

Mariuma stood poised, looking breathlessly toward Herrack; and he, as if at last caught off guard and without a mask, smiled in a revealing way that brought a flutter of laughter to her mouth:

"Oh, how I have lied and lied! But still I did hate you a little, you were so stupid! I knew—because Sidi Hamet told me!—that you were Huroc! And I loved you!"

She snuggled close and Herrack laughed, held her tightly. "Once you promised me ten blows of the bastinado for this!" He kissed her. "You sell them cheap!" He kissed her again.

Mariuma exclaimed eagerly, "My father has gone to England! To the Scots' king! It was Mary of Scotland my father loved and now Mary of Scotland's son rules England!"

Herrack put his fingers under her chin, lifted her face. "Is this another of your ready tongue's false stories or—I knew he had gone from Tripoli. How can you know it was to England?"

"Oh, I'll never again tell a lie in all my life! Word of his going to England came but a day or two ago through Venice. That lean and hungry Marco, the secretary, loves my maid and he told her. She told me!"

"Then let's start at once, the sooner to reach England!" Herrack shouted, "To the galley! Jehan, gather the men and start them toward the quay!"

Herrack stood before Count Grimani. "I offer you no menace, no insult, and leave you here free. If it eases your anger, raise an alarm! Have bells rung and trumpets sounded! It will mean many dead in the streets of your city and no good purpose served. These men, and I have some three hundred of them, love

fighting. I can hold them down if there is no alarm. But if attacked, they will put fire to Zara and sack the town! The choice is yours!"

Herrack turned on his heel.

THE galley drove ahead in the darkness, turned white water from the sharp prow, and the heavy fifty-foot oars swung with even sweep to the blasts of Bugler Jehan. The great-lunged rowers were used to running up and down mountains and had breath for yelling, even as they heaved to and fro with rhythmic surge of bodies. They had no thought of pursuit. Sailing ships, even if manned and armed, could not follow in so light a breeze. There was no galley in the channel. Old Luigi, the Zaratime salt smuggler, knew where the patrol galleys lurked.

Mariuma's loosened, flame-colored hair flew in the wind, her tawny eyes were bright with joy and eagerness. She murmured toward Herrack's ear, "Allah has heard me—and answered!" She was a corsair's daughter—and here was the sea, and fierce, bronzed men, not unlike her father's own fighting men; and the rush of salt wind was on her face, and the arm of Huroc the Uskob about her. Mariuma snuggled close, rapturously happy to be at last submissive.

Herrack stood near the helmsmen to translate old Luigi's words.

In the dawn-darkness the galley raced within a hand's easy toss of black rocks, barely awash and unseen until broadside.

"Have a care, Luigi! That was close. Make no mistake!"

"Nay, Master," Luigi answered softly, "though I were blind, none! What is missed, however near, is harmless." He grinned, stirring the wrinkles on his old weathered face, stroked the heavy pouch. "Be easy, Master. Old Luigi has no wish now to go to heaven—with all his gold unspent!"

THE END

THE CAMP-FIRE

where readers, writers and adventurers meet

TOM ROAN, author of many stories and several books, joins our Writers' Brigade with "Mamook the Mighty." Roan is a strapping big fellow who began his life in the West at fifteen as a cowboy in Texas. He's never had a strong instinct for settling down. He's been a circus rider, cavalryman, railroad special agent, Montana bronco buster; in later years many times a deputy sheriff, became a fingerprint expert, headed the detective force in Pocatello, Idaho, served as city and county detective in other Western localities, and turned to writing.

Of his subject he says:

Perhaps I will leave several things open to argument, but I have lived a number of years in the American "big game" country—in Montana, Colorado, northern Idaho, the high California Sierras, and in the Northwest. As a youth, I was a circus rider and developed into something of an animal man. Until something very conclusive comes along to change me, I will still believe the grizzly the most ferocious and deadly animal when angered; and I will still argue that the grizzly is a most peaceful citizen of the high places when left alone. The last one I saw shot charged a hundred paces. His body was riddled with bullets, the heart shot out of him. One of those heavy .403 Winchesters knocked him down three times. He fell less than a dozen paces from the men firing on him.

When I say that he is peaceful, I do not mean that he is not a dangerous fellow. At times he is easily excited, and any wild animal is dangerous when excited. But I have no fear of him when we see each other from a fair distance; when the approach is casual and he has had time to discover you and that your mission is a peaceful one. Often he stands suddenly on his hind feet, and waves those mighty forefeet and paws as if motioning you to come forward, and then turns abruptly and goes the other way. This is especially true during the hunting season. Strange as it may seem, the animals appear to know the season is on; and the deer and elk do take shelter in the preserves, even though the preserves are so small they can hear the guns cracking all around them. Animals know much more than men care to give them credit for.

Without her cubs, Mamook would have probably been killed. She would have stood and fought, once brought to bay, until the men arrived, but the cubs made the matter an entirely different thing. As to her fishing for Oleman, many men have observed this very thing, not only in the habits of the grizzly but in the black and brown bear as well. I have seen some queer things in the high country by sitting quietly and watching the antics of the Wild Folk. Things many an "all-knowing" hunter will never see, and things he would swear were the concoctions of an unholy liar if I put them to paper. For instance, just to rowel the sceptics: A grizzly sitting atop of a cliff with a stick in his paws and imitating the castings of a fisherman in a river below. And this past summer, out in Glacier National Park, a big

fellow following Hugh Peyton, Fire Director, just to watch the pumps work when a forest fire was licking up the earth. Curiosity? Plenty, brother, plenty.

He looks like a clumsy fellow, and yet he is as fast as light. When he slaps, something falls. There is a man out in Oregon who had an eighteen hundred pound stallion that charged a grizzly. The grizzly hit one lick, crushed that stallion's skull as if he had struck with a sledge and broke his neck in two places—and calmly went about his business. Is a tiger's neck any stronger or his skull any thicker? No, and he and the lion haven't the fighting guts you will never fail to find in the grizzly.

His story is illustrated by Lynn Bogue Hunt, a naturalist and a well-known portrayer of animals, who makes this comment—

The grizzly bear is the one really dangerous game animal of the United States, and with its cousins, the Alaskan bears, has accounted for some dreadful fatalities among hunters. Like most dangerous game, it has learned that it cannot cope with firearms and now has become wary and avoids contact with man; whereas, in the early days of the exploration and settlement of our West, it was frequently the aggressor and showed complete contempt for the presence of man. It now has taken to the wildest and most remote mountain fastness, but in the early days was found in the plains country, where it roamed about—the swaggering bully of its world. The gait is the shuffling walk of all bears. It trots awkwardly and does a fast, clumsy gallop in charging or running away.

VIC WILSON, of Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, recently met Dr. H. H. Matteson and sent me this interesting letter. Neil O'Keeffe enjoyed doing the illustration for "Molo Molly's Parka," and I have observed that my secretary, an efficient and self-contained young lady, breaks into a giggle each time she sees the smack that Molo Molly is giving the man in that drawing. The instant appeal of such a situation is a strange commentary on the gentle sex. Vick Wilson writes—

Most *Adventure* readers are familiar with the stories of Dr. H. H. Matteson, in which move the colorful and "skookum" characters of the Northwest and Alaskan coasts. No one else has written about the Aleutians with the authentic knowledge of "H. H."

Out in that group of islands off our west coast, named by the Spaniards in about 1774 the San Juan Archipelago, I was walking on Orcas Island, near the port of Olga. Having had the way pointed out to the cabin workshop of Dr. Matteson, I knew I was on a hot trail, for from somewhere in the madrona thicket came the steady click of a typewriter.

Yonder through the azure pass came a big war canoe, of ancient vintage. She was carrying a small sail and aided by the paddles of the Indian occupants, a buck and two squaws, she slipped through the still water with graceful swiftness.

Heavily loaded with fishing and hunting paraphernalia, the canoe headed up on the beach, almost at my feet.

The Indians, I opined, might be Cowichans, or maybe Sookes, from the far end of Vancouver Island. They jumped out into the shallow water and hastily unloaded their dunnage up onto the sand. In one of the baskets was a sleeping papoose.

"Going to make camp?" I asked.

"No." The buck muttered. "Ketchum skookum Medicine Man. Matteson. Got em sick papoose."

They moved post haste up the beach and through the thicket, with me right behind them. In a small cabin, in the silence of the forest, we found the good doctor torturing an old battle-scarred typewriter. He looked up with a faraway expression in his kindly eyes, indicating he was slowly coming back from the realm of his characters. Once he grasped the situation, however, he turned to his medicine bag, and concentrated on the task at hand.

While he was busy, I looked around at the interior of the cabin-workshop. In the fireplace at the far end of the room, a blaze fire was throwing colors on the polar bear rug before the hearth. Above the mantel hung a mounted head of an Alaskan sheep. A gun cabinet in the corner held many pieces, some of them rare old Sharps. A Thlingit Indian prayer blanket draped over the back of a chair. Above the shelves of files and volumes were crossed a pair of babiche-filled snowshoes. It was the room of a man who had been to far places. There were a Chinese carved desk and many lacquered tables, a Zambesi war shield, a Philippine bolo, a Guiana boar-tusk bracelet, and so on.

The papoose cared for, the Indians went

out, and Dr. Matteson turned to me with a look of inquiry in his blue eyes.

"Will those Indians pay you for their medical care?" I asked.

"They're going to catch a salmon for me," he replied, and sat down before the decrepit typewriter.

I looked at a row of photographs strung along the cedar wall and covered with varnish as a preservative. They were all scenes from a moving picture once made of one of the doctor's stories of a Cypress Island Indian legend called "The Rock Where the Wind Whispers".

"Perhaps I had better come back sometime when you are not so busy, Dr. Matteson."

"Yeah," he grunted. "Got a hen on this morning."

The typewriter was clicking steadily as I went back down to the beach.

But the next season, during the salmon run out at Nushagak on Bering Sea, I stepped off a McGee Airways plane and was pleasantly surprised to find that Dr. Matteson was sanitary inspector for the fisheries. I met him again. Out in those windswept cannery towns, men are glad to talk.

"Well," he began, "after about twenty years of busy family practice as doctor in a Middlewestern town, I determined to see the world, and make my profession take me places.

"Surgeon to an exploring and development company in Central America, and doctor to a big silver mine outfit in Mexico started me on my way.

"Next, as ship's surgeon, I made many trips to the Orient.

"Always when I wanted to settle down, and write, my cabin in San Juan Archipelago called me. I was there at the beginning of war and tried for a place in the Army. Due to a physical disability, I was turned down, but they told me if I was patriotic, they needed surgeons in the federal prisons. I took it on, and was soon sorry, due to the depressing atmosphere, but the men were interesting, especially Simiak, a trusty Aleut, who was personal houseboy to me. For teaching him the three "r's" he taught me more of the intimate details of Aleut life, myths, religious rites, than I could have learned from any other source.

"Those Aleutian Islands," Dr. Matteson pointed a thumb back to the Southwest, "they'll come into their own some day. They will be heavily fortified and used as Naval and Military bases.

"Why, it might be a good piece of Americanism, if everybody would get out a map and study. Few realize that from Attu, our outmost island, it is only three hundred miles to Kommandrov Islands, Russian territory. And from Attu Head to Paremiskiro, the outermost of the Japs Kurils, is six hundred miles, a distance an army plane, or fast cruiser could make in a jiffy.

"Now, this is not for use as propaganda, or for war scare, but the Japs are already in the Aleutians, the more remote islands, passing themselves off as Aleuts. The amazing resemblance, facially, physically, of an Aleut and a Jap, leads one to believe they may be of the same racial origin."

A boliak full of natives arrived at that moment for medical care from the "Skookum Medicine Man", and that ended our conversation.

The other day I thought of a plan to locate the Doctor, should he be in American waters again, so hied myself over to a friend, who is an amateur radio operator. We "raised" a friend on the Olympic Peninsula, who in turn contacted a whaler operating off Point Thompson. He put Dr. Matteson on and we heard his voice relayed through the shore station.

"Been enjoying a few thrills aboard this whaler," came his voice, full of exuberance. "Believe it or not, I saw a man with light tackle, take and land a fifty-nine pound Tyee salmon.

"Saw them unload sixty thousand seal pelts here the other day, from Pribilof and St. Paul's Island.

"In many of my stories, I have had occasion to laud the Coast Guard, *semper paratus*, of the Aleutian and Alaskan coasts. What husky skookum men they have! Incidentally, the whale boat crew of the C. G. *Talapoosa*, the other day, in Juneau harbor, beat the crews of nearly a dozen native ships. Got to sign off, old man, and '73's' to you and to the editor and readers of *Adventure*."

In the language of the radio amateurs, "73" means "best regards!"

CAPTAIN JEAN M. ELLRICH is a commercial shark fisherman in the Philippines, where he uses a crew of Moro boys such as he describes in "Shark!" He was formerly an investigator there for the Bureau of Navigation. He was, before that, a fisherman off Baja California; and before that, many things. His face carries a long scar from

a knife that he got in Russia, where he was a flyer for the White Russians—his friends nickname him "Swede" or "Scarface."

American Army—was stationed at Camp Dix, New Jersey, working in the DCI—"never reported anyone for being drunk and disorderly, but only on the political side getting the bolsheviks out. Later flew on some commercial jobs out of St. Louis and San Antonio, went to the West Coast and worked on lumber schooners. Went on a gold-hunting expedition up the Amazon and came out with a bad case of fever. Has carried one of the old *Adventure* "71" buttons for fifteen years.

ANNOUNCING the appointment of a new *Ask Adventure* expert—Major R. Ernest Dupuy, F.A., will succeed Major Thomas H. Dameron, who has resigned, on the subject of horses; care, training, jumping, polo, the cavalry arm. Major Dupuy gives this brief account of himself:

Born in New York City, March 24, 1887. Always wanted to be a soldier, since my people had been soldiers—French and British armies—for untold generations. Enlisted in A Co., Signal Corps, N.G.N.Y. in 1909 when that outfit prided itself on being the hardest riding mounted unit in the New York National Guard. Ten years on *The New York Herald* in the days of the late James Gordon Bennett. First commissioned in the 8th N.Y. Coast Artillery, 1915, went overseas as a Captain of the 57th Artillery, CAC, serving through the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne engagements, and remained in the Regular Army after the war. Served in the Philippines, travelled in China, North Africa, Turkey, Balkans, Palestine and Syria as well as Europe. While in the Near East on leave studied extensively the French and Spanish Foreign Legions. Write a little fiction. Play a little polo. Always interested in horse management since I learned the first rudiments of equitation under my uncle in the French field artillery in 1905. Particularly interested in training remounts and jumping. Graduate of the Field Artillery School in 1924, Command and General Staff School in 1933. General Staff Eligible List, 1933.

RAYMOND S. SPEARS adds a new listing to his *Ask Adventure* service—Wildcrafting and Trapping. Such subjects as living off wilderness country as you travel through it are matters on which Mr. Spears is an acknowledged expert. His broadened service should prove of considerable use to our readers.

"DEVONIAN" writes from Littleham, Devonshire: "I noticed in your *Ask Adventure* section that there was an inquiry concerning the collecting of British Army badges. I would suggest that your inquirer gets in touch with Shirley Brooks, Woolwich, England. This firm specializes in army supplies and always carries a comprehensive stock of cap badges and insignia."

HERE'S a letter from a man who wants to hit the trail again and feels that among our readers he'll find a comrade of similar bent.—G. B. Huddleston, Paradis, Louisiana.

If the fact that I read the first copy of *Adventure* back in 1910; that I was reading a story in *Adventure* (which I never finished) when a German sub. attacked us in the Irish Sea and that I found a torn copy of the magazine and three skeletons at the head waters of the Orinoco entitles me to ask a favor, I'm asking that it be granted now. I'm asking because I know that should my letter be published it will reach the exact type of men I want to contact.

I am a civil engineer by profession, forty-six years of age, and have traveled over most of the world. I served through the war and came out with a disability for which I draw $324.00 per year. I have a little money aside from that.

I would like to get in touch with another educated man in similar circumstances, the object being the acquisition of a car, boat or any other means of transportation, just so we can do as we please, stay clear of the police and find out what is around the bend in the trail or over the hill ahead. We must have some business that will pay for the gas, etc.

Any one interested please write me and maybe we can get together.

FROM Harry Strong, of Dallas, Texas, come this letter and a poem he wrote on the snow trails:

As an ardent Adventurer who used to pack *Adventure* along seal-hunting fifty and sixty miles out on the Arctic pack to warm up mentally on Surdez and the rest; I now, in the spirit of Jase Quill and old Bettles, am taking an initial long shot in sending to you an Arctic chiller which I've just run across in an old trail log I used to keep during the seven years I roamed the Alaskan Coast from Nome to Barrow.

I'm a hardboiled optimist so whatever happens to it won't wreck anything. It just so happens that I've read it to a couple of old sourdoughs who say it brings back to them those blue smoky mornings when the river ice cracks like a cannon and the spruce trees snap like rifles.

I'll stop now. This is giving me a bad attack of "hot-foot."

FIFTY BELOW

When Cold walks abroad in her ermine-frost cloak
And the air you breath turns to ghostly smoke;
When the heads of spikes inside the walls
Are covered inch-deep with little frost balls
And kerosene in the can outside
Will just barely pour when the tap's open wide . . . .
When you hit the trail in weather like that
You envy the seal every ounce of his fat.

The dog's chains burn through your cotton gloves
As you rassel 'em out with shouts and shoves.
They whimper and lift their feet from the ground
As you jam on their collars and push 'em round.
There's nary a yelp or a fight or a jump
As you let your snubbing line loose from the stump.
Only the sled runners screech and whine
When you pull out onto that endless line
Of frost covered stakes across the bay
On the trail heading north up Barrow way.

Kotzebue to Anniuk March 11, 1931.

IT MAY seem curious to you comrades reading this March issue that anything should be said about New Year's Day. But I am writing this on the last day of 1935.

A few days ago I met a Japanese who told me of the Japanese celebration at the end of the year that lasts several days. There's a difference, apparently, in the psychology of the holiday there and here. The idea of their celebration, he said, is to forget the year that has passed. We turn on the radio to hear Big Ben in London and wait up at home to greet the new year, or we go out somewhere and wear a paper hat, whirl a rattle or blow a horn—but however we do it, we hopeful Americans are saying, "Hello 1936!"

Well, so we're losing 1935, old and bent. He's been pretty good in a number of ways, and an ornery enough cuss in others. But he's brought us here on the staff an increasingly large and friendly correspondence with our readers, and that's a satisfaction. He brought us a wider acquaintance with writers, and some new and good ones; and some stories that I was pretty proud to print. He brought us a twenty-fifth anniversary issue that gave us a pleasantly large addition to the number of our readers. We can't brag about the fellow entirely—he brought us blunders, but he's left nothing on the record we have to feel ashamed about. A kind thing about old 1935 is that he leaves us looking at 1936 in better spirits than cynical old 1934 left us looking at 1935. The same thought will occur to millions of other Americans as twelve o'clock ticks on its way tonight.

When you read this you'll already be off soundings in your adventure on the unknown ocean 1936, and the sentiment comes late from me, but all the same, comrades—Happy New Year.

—H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

THE horse should have the consideration in steeplechasing.

Request:—I like steeplechasing. I never miss an opportunity to see such races, and read with interest all accounts. I notice the jockeys in these races always take their jumps sitting upright or leaning backward, with their legs stretched out in front of them and seem to be pulling on their horses' mouths. Yet at the Horse Show here in New York and in sports pictures in the papers I see Army officers taking high jumps leaning far over their horses' necks. It seems to me that the professional jockey must be right. Yet cavalry officers should know how to ride, too. Can you explain this?

—R. J. FRANK, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Major Ernest Dupuy:—The answer is simple. Did you ever ride a bicycle without using the handlebars? If so, remember that you leaned backward to balance yourself. So the professional steeplechase jockey, interested only in getting his trained horse over the course as fast as possible at the least risk to his own neck, leans backward to balance himself. On the other hand the Army officer, a horsemaster (and thank Heaven the civilians are getting around to it too) knows that the horse supports his weight on the fore legs and propels himself with the hind. Hence the further forward the weight of the rider the less strain on the propellers. Furthermore, with the legs carried back behind the girth one can force the animal forward. Both riders are professionals; but whereas the average steeplechase jockey is only a passenger on a fast moving vehicle, the Army man is interested in attaining best performance through horsemastership, which includes utilization of weight, hands, legs (termed the aids) to get the most out of that complicated living mass of springs and counter-balances we term the horse.

THE humbug has never been measured. But insects come in all sizes—up to a foot.

Request:—I am a school boy, fourteen years old, and I am collecting bugs, spiders and insects as a hobby.

A friend in San Antonio mentioned that he had seen spiders on the Island of Taboga as large as dinner plates (they lived on birds); and beetles in British Guiana that were six inches long and two and one-half inches wide; and butterflies ten inches across.

Are these statements true? Have you any knowledge or record of such unusually large spiders, beetles, and butterflies from any country?

Could you please tell me where I can get books on insects?

—F. T. KOTT, Boerne, Tex.

Reply by Dr. S. W. Frost:—Your friend has not exaggerated the size of certain insects

and spiders of tropical and exotic countries. The great bulk of insects run to small sizes and we are accustomed to think that they are small creatures. The insects with which we come in contact and those that annoy us, such as the ant, fly, mosquito, bee, wasp, etc., are comparatively small. Some foreign insects, however, are so large that they have been mistaken, at long range, for larger animals. The first time I saw a cat playing with a three-inch cockroach, I thought it had a mouse. I knew a bird collector who shot a three-inch beetle in a tree top in Panama believing that it was a bird. On the other hand some insects are so small that they cannot be seen without the aid of a microscope. There are small parasitic insects which are scarcely one thirty-second of an inch long.

The largest living insect is a moth (Erebus agrippina) from Brazil which has a wing expanse of eleven inches.

Many of the exotic grasshoppers are large insects. The Venezuelan species (Acridium latreillei) is six and a half inches long and has a wing expanse of nine and a half inches.

The largest beetle is a tropical species of long horn (Cerambycidae) which is six to eight inches long with legs outstretched. Another large beetle is the giant scarab from Africa which is six and a half inches long.

There is a South American spider with a body two inches long which measures seven inches with the legs outstretched. I would imagine that this spider would look twice as large if you saw it in the tropical jungles. The spider runs rapidly and feeds upon birds and large insects. It was described two hundred years ago and called Avicularia because at that time its food was supposed to be birds alone.

Among the extinct or fossil insects there are many walking sticks and dragon flies which greatly exceed in size the insects mentioned above.

Some of these insects you will find figured in "Insects Abroad" by J. G. Wood, a book published in 1874 by Longmans Green and Co., an old book but well illustrated. The giant scarab was recently figured in Ward's Entomological Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 2. I believe you can obtain a free copy of this bulletin by writing Ward's Natural History Establishment, Inc., 302 Goodman's Street, Rochester, N. Y.

Your friend has awakened your interest in entomology. While you are looking for the larger species do not forget that the smaller species are just as interesting.

PHILATELY makes assets of accidents.

"Request:—Please explain use of "way" cancellation on early United States Stamps. Also "free."

I understand the 1857 issue of United States, together with 1851 issue, were demonitized for postage use by the Postmaster General on July first, 1861, on account of large numbers of these stamps in hands of postmasters of the Southern States, which had succeeded, and used these stamps until June 30, 1861. The 1861 issue—first day—as shown by Scott's Catalogue is in August, 1861. What was used for postage stamps in the period between July 1, 1861, and August, 1861?

—MAJOR A. R. REEVES, Sumter, S. C.

Reply by Mr. H. A. Davis:—*Way.* This postal marking found on covers, and sometimes on the stamps as a cancellation, indicates mail for a way postoffice, that is, an office between the first and terminal offices of the postal route.

Free. This postal marking was used to show the franking privilege by government officials, previous to departmental stamps and the printed card in the usual stamp place now used by the different government departments. After the beginning of the use of departmental stamps and printed franking card on the envelopment, in the earlier days, this stamp "free" was often used as a cancelling mark for the stamps. Where it is found on a stamp instead of a cover, it has no significance except a cancelling mark.

Demonitization: Before the Confederate Government issued their stamps the postmaster used a pen or a rubber stamp in place of the regular postage stamp to denote postage paid either as "paid" or the amount in figures, the same way as was done before stamps were issued and used.

AN interesting A. A. reply. But we don't mean to encourage such sweeping inquiries.

Request:—I would like some information on the ancient Mayan race. Could you give me a brief summary of their existence? Do the natives of Hidalgo speak true Mayan today? Could I obtain any data on their language?

—WILLIAM B. ALBERT, Newport, R. I.

Reply by Mr. Seymour G. Pond:—That is quite some large order. The major part of the information available today is to be found in the Carnegie Foundation, because this Foundation has done most of the Mayan research. I would suggest that you consult the Carnegie library in Newport, also the following books:

"Red Tiger," by E. Phillips Russel. (Modern Mayan civilization.)

"Silver Cities of Yucatan," Gregory Mason. (Ancient civilizations.)

"Works of H. H. Bancroft," Vol. III. (Languages of the Mayas.) Any library.

I might add here, however, some points that may be of interest to you on the Mayans. The natives of the State of Hidalgo do not speak true Mayan any longer, nor do they in any states left in Mexico today. There is no true Mayan tongue spoken in this age. It has long since dwindled. There are traces of it found among the Indian names, but traces only. The Mayans originally settled over areas comprising Yucatan, Hidalgo, Chiapas, Campeche, Tabasco, Quintana Roo, also in Guatemala and Honduras.

A MARINE Academy instead of Experience's bitter school.

Request:—Is there a national merchant marine academy? If so where can information be obtained?

Do either New York or California admit non-resident cadets to their nautical schools? What are the entrance requirements? Tuition?

—Hardy Cowen, Austin, Texas.

Reply by Commander Edward Ellsberg, U. S. N. R.:—There is no national merchant marine academy. However, four states maintain state academies with the assistance of the Navy, these being New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and California. Non-residents of these states are admitted, providing there is no such school in their own state. The best equipped school is probably that of New York.

The requirements are that the applicant be between the ages of 17 and 21, unmarried, a high school graduate in good physical condition. Appointments are made from a competitive list giving weight to high school record and general adaptability.

For cadets from outside the state, the fees total $750 a year.

For more detailed information address: New York State Merchant Marine Academy, 80 Center Street, New York City.

LITERATURE for the modern Robin Hood.

Request:—Can you give me the name or names of any one publishing archery magazines? Also the names of some books on archery and where I can purchase them?

—C. M. Owen, Woodstock, Va.

Reply by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—You might write to Penn Publishing Co., Philadelphia, Pa. for Elmer's book "Archery," price $5. Or to James Duff, 130 Zabriskie St., Jersey City, N. J. for "Bows and Arrows," price $2.

As to magazines—there is one printed at Tulsa, Oklahoma, called the *Archery Review*, and there is going to be one published in Oregon called the *American Bowman*. *Archery Review*, Box 361, Tulsa, Oklahoma. *American Bowman*, Albany, Oregon.

OZARK RIPLEY'S choice in a shotgun—

Request:—I have seen your name in the *Adventure* as an expert on shotguns, and I am writing to ask your advice as to the best type of gun for a combined trap shooting and field work gun. I am only a beginner, and would like to know your opinion on this matter as to specifications, etc. for one who does not want to have more than one gun.

—F., Boston, Mass.

Reply by Mr. John B. Thompson:—The newest in an average trap and field gun is a double barrel, thirty inches, right modified, and left full choke twelve gauge shotgun.

If you are going in for skeet shooting, choose a double twelve gauge twenty-six or twenty-eight inch barrel, right barrel, bored improved cyclinder, and left, modified choke. About seven pounds in weight or at most seven and one-half pounds for both field and skeet shooting.

THE relics and monumented battlefields of the Civil War have outlasted the scholarly books about the weapons.

Request:—I am pursuing as a hobby the study of the Civil War and would appreciate it if you could give me some sort of a bibliography on arms and projectiles used by both the Federal and Confederate army.

—Anthony J. Wildman, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—Books describing the arms and projectiles used in the Civil War are mostly out of print, and it is difficult to suggest anything likely to be available in the stores which would give any adequate description of Civil War weapons. A "Handbook of Artillery," prepared in the Office of the Chief of Ordnance and printed by the Government Printing Office in Washington, in 1925, contains a chapter on the history and development of Artillery and Material. Another official publication, "American Coast Artillery Material," from the same source, also has a chapter devoted to the history of the development of Artillery, which gives some attention to the Civil War period. Both these books can be secured from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at one dollar ($1.00) a copy.

Better for your purposes, perhaps, would be "The History of the United States Army" by Major William A. Ganoe, published by D. Appleton and Company at New York, in 1924. Major Ganoe devotes a portion of one chapter to description of the various types of small arms and cannon in use by the Army during the Civil War period. In addition, a rather complete bibliography lists a number of publications, official and otherwise, dealing with the weapons of that period. Many of these books, as I have stated above, are out of print, but a number of them would no doubt be available in the New York City Library.

THE coin of Haile Selassie's realm is a *tallaro*.

Request:—What is the unit of the Abyssinian monetary system? Do they have any paper money?

—E. DeMent, Hines, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Howland Wood:—I have not heard that the Abyssinians have issued any paper money. Their unit is the *tallaro*, which would roughly correspond to a silver dollar. There seems to be more or less confusion about the divisions of the *tallaro*. In the old days sixteen *guerches* went to a *tallaro*. Another name for this is *mehalek*. The last coins received from there, which are in copper and nickel, appear to be in *centimes*. Whether these *centimes* are one hundred to a *tallaro* or to a *franc* I have been unable to ascertain.

THE long-armed Law uses teletype.

Request:—The Massachusetts State Police have teletypes, with which they can communicate all over the state. Are these in general use? Could Massachusetts Police talk with, say, Texas this way? If they wanted a man out of some other state, will that state hold him for them? Can a local force call on the state force whenever it wants to?

—Anson M. Grover, Boston, Mass.

Reply by Mr. Francis H. Bent:—You have brought up questions which the average person seems to overlook—the promptness and ease of communication between the various police departments. This is much speedier than ordinarily thought, though it is not perfected to a full degree as yet.

Teletypes are pretty much in general use among departments whose duties cover general law enforcement. Practically all the states have some method of teletype hook-up.

Massachusetts could, by means of relays, communicate in this way with Texas, owing to coast-to-coast machine which is installed at the State House and which enables them to talk to any city or town in the United States, where a teletype machine is installed.

At present there is a direct or relay hook-up in an eight state system comprising Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Ohio. Messages, however, as mentioned above, may be relayed beyond these states.

Yes, one state will hold a man for another, provided he has committed an extraditable offense.

In most cases the local force may call for aid on the state force. One of the duties of the State Police is to cooperate with all local law enforcement agencies.

YOURS for accurate terminology—

Request:—In a recent discussion with local Sea Scouts, I contended that the really correct, sea-salty term for the *ribs* of a wooden framed sailboat is *frames*. Am I right?

—Wm. H. LaRue, Port Townsend, Wash.

Reply by Mr. Charles H. Hall:—The correct term is *frames*, not *ribs*. In the old ships the frame was built up of a number of pieces, known as floors, several futtocks and the top timbers. I do not think that a vessel's frames or timbers were ever properly called ribs.

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Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 161 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Coins: *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *salt and fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose St., N. Y. C.

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS-BENJAMIN, 1177 East 15th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Health Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping; and polo; the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., New York City.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 108 Winthrop Rd., Brookline, Mass.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1350 N. Harvard Blvd., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Oriental Magic and Effects—JULIEN PROSKAUER, 148 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 3, BOX 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Soccer—MR. BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure.*

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 1354 N. 4th St., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachute gliders*—MAJOR FALK HABMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Chapel Hill, N. C.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America. Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places, general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 182 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Sunken Treasure: *salvaging and diving*—COMDR. EDWARD ELLSBERG, U. S. N. R., care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 5511 Cabanne Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St, Fair Haven, N. J.

Navy Matters: *United States and Foreign*—LT. COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U. S. N. (retired), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Fla.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—PATRICK LEE, 11 Franklin Pl., Great Neck, Long Is., N. Y.

Police, City and State—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Coast Guard—COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U.S.N. (ret.), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Florida.

U. S. Marine Corps and Civilian Conservation Corps—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R. F. D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, Calif.

World War: *strategy, tactics, leaders, armies, participants, historical and political background*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

The Sea, Part 1 *British and American waters, ships, seamen, statistics, record, oceans, waterways, seas, islands. Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Cape Horn, Magellan Straits, Mediterranean Sea, Islands and Coasts.*—COMDR. EDWARD ELLSBERG, U.S.N.R., care of *Adventure*. ★**2** *Antarctica*—F. LEONARD MARSLAND, care of The Agent General for Queensland, Queensland House, The Strand, London, W. C. 2, England.

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand; Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney. Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure*. **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure*. **3** *Northern China and Mongolia*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Japan*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntingdon Ave., Scarsdale, N. Y. **5** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **6** ★*Palestine*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—GORDON MAC CREAGH, Box 197. Centerport, Long Island, N. Y. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara, caravans.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care of *Adventure*. **5** *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, 1641 Greenlawn Ave., Akron, Ohio. **6** *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, and Rhodesia.*—CAPT. F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Simi, Calif. **7** ★*Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING. Corunna, Ont., Canada. **8** ★*Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa. Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, 24 Cuba St., Havana, Cuba.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany*—G. I. COLBURN, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn. **2** *The Balkans: Jugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece and Turkey. The Austrian Succession States: Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary—History, customs, travel.*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care of *Adventure*.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure*. **2** *Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 414 W. 121st St., N. Y. C.

★**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America—SEYMOUR POND, care of *Adventure*.

Mexico, Part 1 ★*Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md. **3** ★*South of line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16. Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Newfoundland—C. T. JAMES, Box 2064, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Greenland—*Dog-teams, whaling, Eskimos, etc.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada, Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island*—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, N. Y. **2** ★*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **3** ★*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungova and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure*. **4** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate*, Trenton, Ont., Canada. **5** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **6** *Hunters Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Dept. of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. **7** *Lake of Woods Region.*—R. P. LINCOLN, care of U. FRILUND, 4943 Dupont Ave., So. Minneapolis, Minn. **8** ★*Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **9** *Northw. Ter. and Arctic, Ellesmere Land and half-explored islands west, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands. North Greenland.*—PATRICK LEE, 11 Franklin Pl., Great Neck, Long Is., N. Y. **10** ★*Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie, Northern Keewatin, Hudson Bay Mineral Belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1350 No. Harvard, Blvd., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure*. **2** *Utah and Arizona.*—GORDON GORDON, P. O. Box 2582, Tucson, Ariz. **3** *New Mexico (Indians, etc.)*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Wyoming and Colorado.*—Homesteading, etc. E. P. WELLS, Sisters, Oregon. **5** *Nevada, Montana, and Northern Rockies.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **6** *Idaho and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 1 *Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.*—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care of *Adventure*. **2** *Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and border waters; touring, fishing.*—R. P. LINCOLN, care of U. FRILUND, 4943 Dupont Ave., So. Minneapolis, Minn. **3** *Missouri, Arkansas, Missouri River up to Sioux City, Ozarks, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi and Lake Michigan.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure*. **4** *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River.*—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P. O., Ingram, Pa. **5** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **6** *Great Lakes (all information).*—H. C. GARDNER, care of *Adventure*.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All Territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Western Maine. All Territory west of Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor Me. **3** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 29 Baldwin St., Aimes Pt., West Haven, Conn. **4** *Adirondacks, New York*, RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif **5** *New Jersey.*—F. H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J. **6** *West Va., Md., District of Columbia.*—ROBERT HOLTON BULL, 842 Spring Ave., South Hills, Charleston, W. Va. **7** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure*. **8** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

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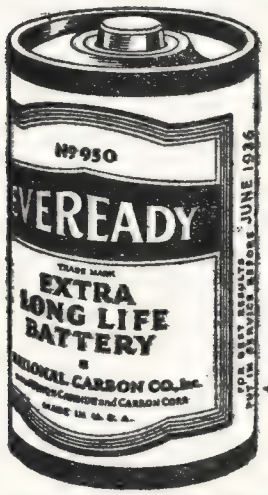
Edward Eiskamp who, with six companions, had this thrilling experience in the Sam's Point area in the wilds of the Catskills.

"*Splash* . . . our tiny rock-bound world went black! I had dropped our flashlight into a pool of icy water at the very bottom of that cavern-maze that burrows for miles in every direction under the Catskills. Without light, here was our living tomb. In weeks or months or years someone would find seven skeletons in this crypt.



"But the light continued to burn. Up through eight feet of water came the bright halo of hope. We fished up that flashlight, and those powerful *fresh* Eveready Batteries lighted our way back from Eternity."

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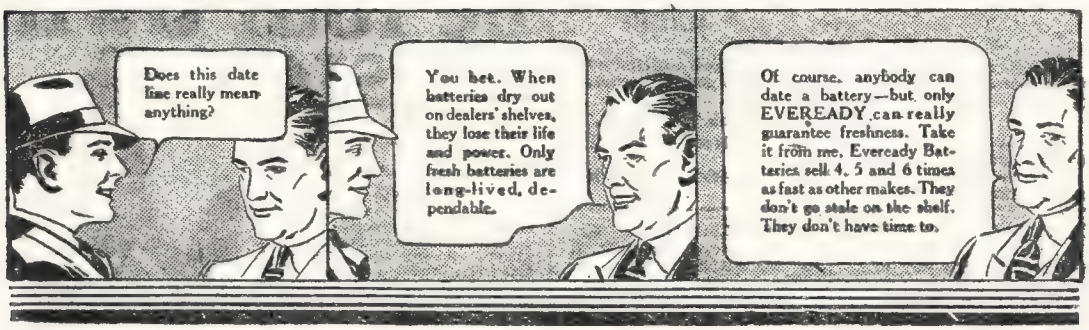
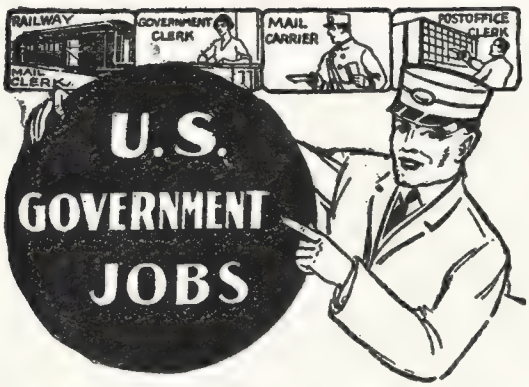

Does this date line really mean anything?
You bet. When batteries dry out on dealers' shelves, they lose their life and power. Only fresh batteries are long-lived, dependable.
Of course, anybody can date a battery—but only EVEREADY can really guarantee freshness. Take it from me, Eveready Batteries sell 4, 5 and 6 times as fast as other makes. They don't go stale on the shelf. They don't have time to.



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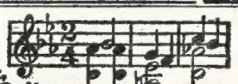

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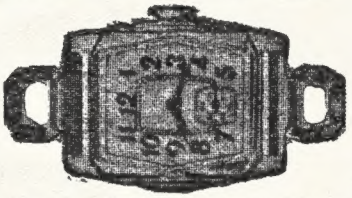

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30x5.00-20	2.55	1.05
5.25-17	2.60	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.60	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.60	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.60	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.90	1.15
5.50-17	2.95	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.95	1.15
29x5.50-19	2.95	1.15
6.00-17	3.10	1.15
30x6.00-18	3.10	1.15
31x6.00-19	3.10	1.15
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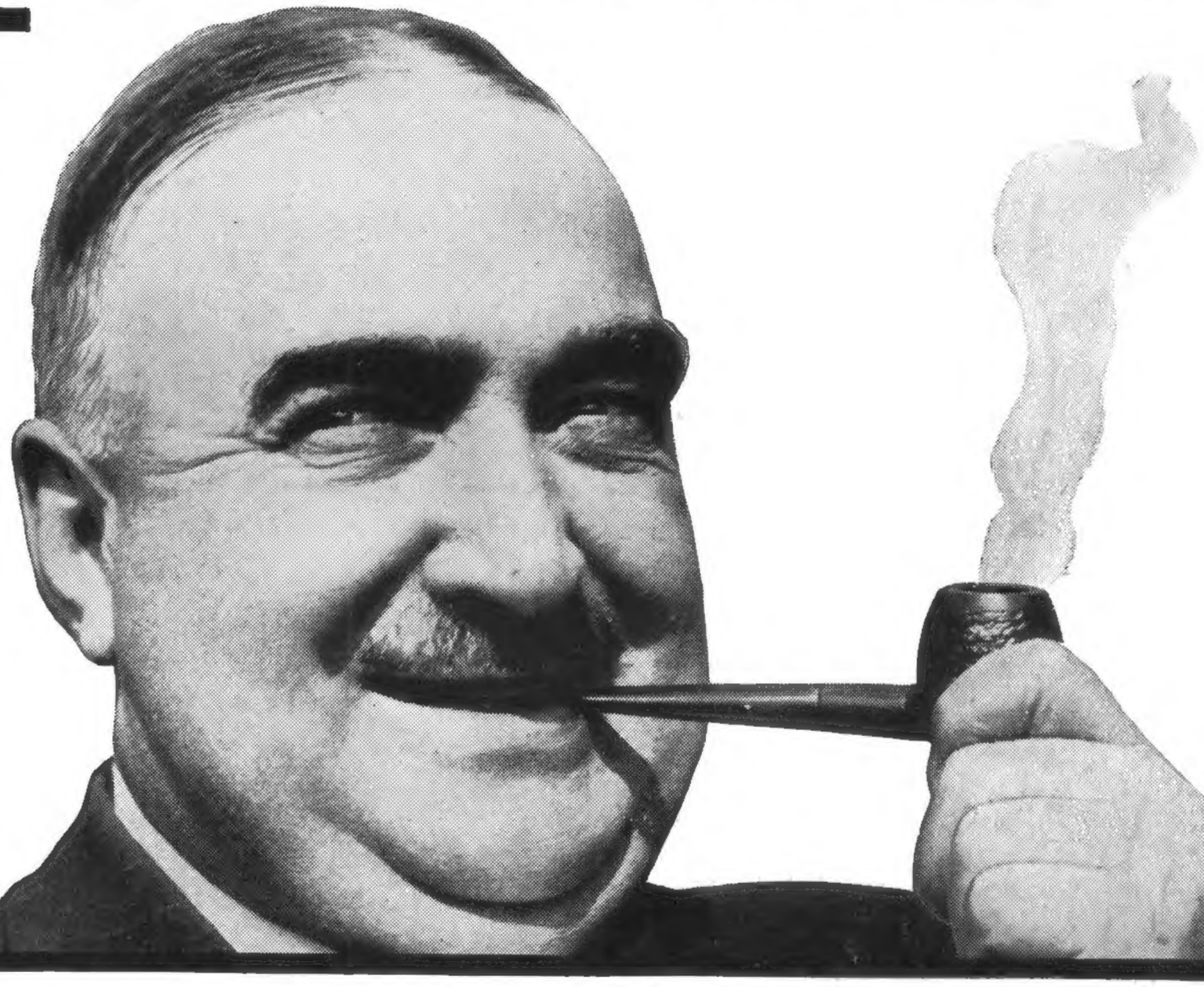

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